ALL THE QUESTIONS YOU EVER WANTED TO ASK AMERICAN ATHEISTS

WITH ALL THE ANSWERS

by Jon Murray and
Madalyn O'Hair

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Introduction

You have a healthy, open mind. You're curious and you have a desire to know, to seek further information. How do I know this? Well, you've opened this book. You've taken the first step toward finding out what Atheism is all about and what it can offer you.

So, who are American Atheists? We're bankers, florists, and politicians; we're next-door neighbors, writers, and plumbers; we're lawyers, musicians, and grocery clerks; we're librarians, sanitation workers, teachers, and movie stars. And we're all over this country.

What have you heard about Atheists? That we're evil or immoral or foolish? That we're communists or abortionists or child pornographers? Have you been asked to pray for us?

Our Atheism is undermined, slandered, and censored by everyone from postal clerks to politicians, in small towns to the nation's capitol, from city hall to the White House. We suffer reprisals — and often violence — from a zealous minority of the population infused with the intolerance of religion. Those of us who publicly proclaim our Atheism are often scorned and even ostracized in our work places, in our neighborhoods, and sometimes in our own homes.

How do we differ from you? We're free from religion, and we want to stay that way. We resist efforts by the church to determine how we should live — what we should read, what we should view, what we should believe, and how we should behave. We are alarmed at efforts by the church to infiltrate politics and government, to distort history — both U.S. and biblical — in order to serve its own ends, and to influence public education in America.

All the Questions You Ever Wanted to Ask American Atheists provides not only answers about Atheism, but also revelations about the true nature of religion.

Read *All the Questions* and discover that some churches are wealthy beyond imagination, that they invest heavily and deceptively in the stock market, that they harm public school education, and that they use propaganda to brainwash children.

Read and discover that colonial America was decidedly anti-religious, that religion is systematically encroaching into government affairs, and that religion has spawned much violence and bloodshed throughout U.S. history.

Read and discover that Christianity is an intolerant, hate-filled religion and that the Bible is replete with cruelty, absurdities, and contradictions.

All the Questions is divided into three parts. In Part One you'll find responses to questions on talk/back or call/in radio shows. The issues here are broad-ranging and address topics such as god, the soul, sin, hell, morality, prayer, death, marriage, and taxes. Part Two consists of Atheist responses to written questions answered at an open forum at Southwestern University in Texas. More immediate and more topical than those in Part One, the issues here focus on Ronald Reagan, Pope John Paul II, Jews, Blacks, the U.S.S.R., foreign policy, abortion, social reform, and education. The Appendix rounds out the book with excerpts from "Atheists," a speech Dr. Madalyn O'Hair delivered at the 12th Annual National Atheist Convention in Washington, D.C. This speech is a healthy, introspective, and surprisingly critical look at ten types of Atheists — from hate-ridden Atheists (the worst type) to Maslovian Atheists (the ideal type). Every Atheist, everyone open to Atheism, should read this speech and examine his or her own motivations.

We want you to know more about us, about why we are Atheists. That's why this book exists. In reading our answers, you may be surprised at how often you'll agree with our viewpoint.

Enjoy!

Jes Simmons

Preface

After working with American Atheists for over twenty years, meeting and speaking with literally hundreds of thousands of Atheists, it has become apparent to the executives of The American Atheist Center that there are as many kinds of Atheists as there are theists.

Few, if any, know the fundamental premises on which the theoretics of Atheism are based. This is not altogether unnatural since information concerned with Atheism has always been suppressed. The only articles in the hard media, newspapers and magazines, have consistently been attacks on the position either by clergy or by biased writers, or alternate articles, the intent of which is to show the Atheist as freak. The cinema and stage have always depicted the Atheist as someone injured by society, or physically disabled through circumstance or birth, who then turns in deep-seated fury against the god concept. The Atheist, in popular folk legend, has a traumatic conversion against god, emotional in nature and, in the end, destructive to himself. Every Atheist in legend is brought to an acceptance of god on his deathbed, or through the warmness of persons who are religious and who soothe his emotional ills by their acceptance of him as an injured human being who is nonetheless one of god's children.

The educational establishment has carefully ostracized Atheism as a discipline. Although the primary and secondary school system in the United States is thoroughly saturated with a Protestant Christian ethic, Atheism has been anathema either directly or by inference. All "morality" reinforcement in our culture has been with religious referents. A citizen of the United States is swathed in Judeo-Christianity from birth to death and particular emphasis is laid upon its importance in both the "spiritual" and the political part of our culture. The concept of patriotism has always been emphasized, by every nation, as being of prime importance, but early in life every child citizen is given to understand that there is an even more important commitment and that commitment is to the god of the nation. God transcends, to use a religious word which we do not like to use but which is appropriate to this concept, even bare nationalism. This is succinctly stated in a slogan flung out recently to our citizenry; we are "one nation *under* God."

There is not a library in the land which has deliberately sought out and stocked Atheist books. Information concerned with Atheism has

been, really, nowhere available. With education, politics, media and libraries closed to the concept, even the word, Atheism has not been broadly known, except during the last twenty years as Madalyn O'Hair has popularized it. Most persons who abandoned religion were forced to do so with feelings of guilt and shame, usually associated with the idea that they were repudiating the persons who had given them early love and training in religion in their home. Faced with the necessity of being in conflict with parents, or home, or relatives, totally scorned by the culture, few had the strength to make an espousal of Atheism, or to attempt to define what they thought and felt, or knew how to do so other than often attempting to state their positions but vaguely.

It was because of this that The American Atheist Center began a deliberate course to assemble all of the written information concerned with Atheism, a task which has taken about twenty years at the time of this writing. The Murray-O'Hairs have visited every city in the United States, haunting old bookstores, laboriously leafing through card files in libraries and in historical archives, in an attempt to accumulate Atheist writings. They have, in addition, visited every country in the world in the search, seeking out the histories, journals or publications of old Atheist organizations, or the remnants of the same. From this was finally established The Charles E. Stevens American Atheist Library and Archives, Inc., which is currently housed in The American Atheist Center in Austin, Texas.

Charles E. Stevens was an old Spanish-American War veteran who helped American Atheists get started, who loved books, and after whom the American Atheist Library was named. This is the first time in the history of the United States that such a special library has been attempted. The library is now comprised of over 22,000 hardback books and about 600,000 leaflets, pamphlets, articles, booklets, magazines, special printings, journals, and throw-aways. In addition, there are about 1,000 manuscripts which have been written by Atheists but never published. In fact, a characterization of Atheist writing is its inability to place itself in print, and if this is accomplished by the author, distribution has been next to impossible since no American magazine, newspaper, stage, or cinema would, ordinarily and certainly not historically, accept an Atheist-based article, drama, poem, informational piece, or an ad to sell the same.

In dealing with the American Atheist community, therefore, it has been the habit of The American Atheist Center to accept all comers who professed Atheism. Now, after a twenty year record of such welcoming into our ranks, it is apparent even to a novice that there are

more pseudo-Atheists in the United States than there are Atheists. By and large, those who profess Atheism simply do not know what they are talking about. They are ill informed, not out of their own desires or intentions but because they are sociologically isolated in a culture in which there is built-in systemic discrimination against Atheism.

The executives at The American Atheist Center have slowly come to realize this and in a speech delivered at the Twelfth Annual National American Atheist Convention (Washington, D.C., 1982), Madalyn O'Hair delimited and defined the various types of Atheists extant in the United States. (See appendix.)

Meanwhile, the Murray-O'Hairs have undertaken literally thousands of public appearances and in them they have been subjected to the most exacting questions concerned with Atheism. This activity characterizes the very popular "talk/back" or "call/in" radio and television programs of the nation, as well as the "open forums" sponsored by colleges and universities. In addition, in the formation of Atheist Chapters, in informal meetings with Atheists, Atheists have, themselves, asked many questions — which will be the subject matter of another volume of "questions." Using the sources in The American Atheist Library and Archives, the Murray-O'Hairs have sought out traditional answers of Atheism throughout the ages on every subject of the Atheist *weltanschauung* (*i.e.*, life-style).

This book has been compiled from those questions and answers which have been given. It is not intended to be a catechism, a gospel, or a dogma set. It is simply the essence of Atheism as seen by activist Atheists throughout the centuries. In the research done by the Murray-O'Hairs, they have been fascinated by the similarity of questions and of answers asked 2,500 years ago, 1,000 years ago, 500 years ago. These ancient questions were always answered with a modern voice. The great activist Atheists were, and are, of one consensus in every respect of their Atheism. Isolated in time and geography and in their own cultures each one, seeking for an intellectual solution to the riddle of the domination of religion, came up with strikingly similar answers. Surely this is a signal to us all.

The authors think of this book as being a handy reference point from which you can start your own investigation. It is endowed with an extensive index to assist you in that task. If you are an Atheist, we present you with the common roots that we have found. As you seek to answer these same questions directed to you, the answers can be given in many ways since each human individual has his own style of expression, drawn on his own life experiences and life education. The book is

meant to be a basis on which you can orchestrate in that unique individual style which speaks of you. We doubt that you will be at issue with us on the generic ideas.

Read and enjoy.

If you have any other questions not answered here, please address them to The American Atheist Center, for subsequent reprints of this book will continue with an enlargement of answers to these basic questions and the addition of even more. We have tried to cover every area about which we have been questioned in the open forums of our nation. We have been corrected both by our continuing research and by intellectual and reasonable arguments based on logic which were more powerful than our own. Since we take the stand of modern science, seeking answers and being willing to change the answer at which we have arrived if additional information would require that, we give you this "present stance" as it is, subject always to change.

The Authors.

ALL THE QUESTIONS YOU EVER WANTED TO ASK AMERICAN ATHEISTS WITH ALL OF THE ANSWERS

Theist: *Just exactly what is an Atheist?*

Atheist: If your questions are not asked with the specificity necessary to answer them, please be aware that we will correct you. An "Atheist" is not a "what." An "Atheist" is a person who has a life-style premised on the *weltanschauung* (life-style) of materialism. That is, we accept "objective reality" in living our lives and we reject any phantasmagoria of the imagination of theistic folk. We live in the real world. Theistic folk live in a world of make-believe.

To put in simply, an Atheist says to you, "What you see is what you get." The fictitious funny book character of Popeye put the Atheist acceptance of reality into one sentence. His continuous comment was "I'm Popeye the sailor man. I am what I am and that's all I am. I'm Popeye the sailor man."

An Atheist uses reason to solve human problems, to make his way in life, to seek happiness, to live with the human community. We eschew the irrational ideas of theism.

T: *I don't think you have answered me. I'll try again. What is Atheism?*

A: Atheism is the accepted life-style of Atheists. Let's look at the word Atheism. This is a word of Greek or Latin derivation and, if you know your grammar, and we presume that you do, an *a* or an *in* used before any word simply takes away the thrust of that word. For instance, the word "independent" simply means "free from dependency." Also, the word "Atheism" simply means "free from theism." The word "agnostic" simply means free from gnosticism, or knowledge — and we'll get back to the idea of agnosticism later.

Therefore, Atheism is freedom from theism, freedom from religion. An Atheist is a person who lives his life free from entanglement with religious ideas, only that and nothing more. Whatever the monkey on

your back is, we are all free from that. We are free from all theistic ideas whether they are Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Jew, voodoo, or Taoistic.

T: *I seem to be getting no place. The dictionary that I have here says, and I quote it, "Atheist — one who denies the existence of God." Now, answer me straight. Do you deny the existence of God?*

A: Well, who wrote that definition in the dictionary? Atheists didn't. A theist supplied that definition and it has almost nothing to do with Atheism.

T: *You are not answering me. Do you believe in God?*

A: When you ask any Atheist if he believes in god, you are putting up a first premise which says "There is a god." Then you ask the Atheist if he believes or disbelieves in that god. That is just the same as asking us if we believe there is a tree outside your window. If there is a tree, what difference does it make if we say that we do or do not believe there is a tree there? The same reasoning applies to the god idea. If you say there is a god and we have a choice of believing or not believing in the god, that does not affect that you have already premised there is a god "out there" somewhere.

T: *Are you going to answer me or not? Do you believe in God?*

A: Our question is do YOU believe in god? Do you believe in the ancient Egyptian sun-god Ra?

T: *Don't be an idiot. Of course I don't believe in a sun-god. My question to you is, "Do you believe in God?"*

A: Our question to you is germane in the discussion here. Do you believe in Thor? in Zeus? in Pallas Athene? in Quetzalcoatl?

T: *Those were old pagan gods. No one believes in them anymore. Of course, I don't believe in them. Are you going to answer my question or not? Do you believe in God?*

A: If we are going to answer your question, we must have it with specificity, as we have indicated to you. What god do you mean? You already have told us that you don't believe in any of the gods in which

millions of people believed in vast eras of time. You want to throw all other gods away and pick and choose as to which god you want us to talk about. You don't "believe in god" yourself. You believe in your current, narrow, constricted idea of your particular god.

T: *Do you believe in God? I am getting irritated.*

A: You are now talking about a modern god we presume, so we must address that question.

T: *Finally! Do you believe in God?*

A: O.K. You push us into a corner, so we will take the modern god who is worshipped by the greatest number of people in the world, but we still must couch the question in different terms. Do we accept as historical or verifiable the triune god Vishnu/Brahma/Siva? No, this god was never anything other than a fictional idea.

T: *What are you talking about? What is this "viz new bra ma sea view"? Do you believe in God? In "God" God?*

A: We are talking about one of the oldest gods in the world and the one that is worshipped by more people than any other god. This is the triune god of Hinduism.

T: *That's a lie. Jesus Christ is our lord and savior and everyone in the world worships him. Do you believe in Jesus Christ?*

A: We are not going to get anywhere by the use of invectives. Please go to any encyclopedia, but preferably one that deals with world religions, and look at the statistics for and the age of the various religious groups in the world. We can tell you in general terms what the situation is, but you really need to do some research yourself. There are about 600 million Hindus, about 550 million Muslims, about 350 million Christians (We are not using puffed Christian figures), about 250 million Buddhists, about 200 million Confucians, 60 million Shintoists, 30 million Taoists, and 15 million Jews. The second youngest of these religions is Christianity and the very youngest is the Islamic, the religion of the Muslims. There are, however, over one billion Atheists in the world.

As to the next part of your question, there was no historical Jesus, therefore there is no such person for anyone to "believe in."

T: *I think you are very good at evading the issue. Let's go back to the dictionary whether you like it or not because that is what people read and that is where we go for definitions. Do you deny the existence of God?*

A: Again, we must know what you are talking about. We are not trying to avoid the issue at all. A moment ago you wanted to talk only about Jesus Christ. That is the god you know. But, we Atheists must talk about all gods, or we must talk about the "god idea."

The "professional" Atheists who deal with these matters on talk/back or call/in radio and television shows must know every god that was ever invented. We need to know his mother (who was usually a virgin) and his father (who was usually a shadowy spirit), what nation he lived in, what the color of his eyes was, and what kind of hair he had, and how tall he was. We need to know when he was born, when he died, how the nation in which he appeared treated him, and why the people finally abandoned him.

Let's take your Jehovah, or Jahveh, or Elohim, or Adonai, or the "I Am that I Am" or whatever you want to call him, and your Jesus Christ. We know all this about them. They were invented by man's imagination just like any other gods.

If you stop just a moment to think about it, you will realize that all gods are an incident of time and place.

T: *That is not true. God has always been, everywhere, in all ages.*

A: Ah, but he has not. For instance, if you had been born in Europe just 500 years ago you would have been a Roman Catholic, like it or not, and if you did not like it you would have been tortured and put to death. If you had been born here in what is now called the United States just 600 years ago, you would have believed in the Great Father in the sky and would have been a pantheist as all our native Indians were. If you had been born in Greece in the year 200 B.C., you would have had an entire pantheon of gods which you would have worshipped, and you would have engaged in many forms of religious worship which are much like the ones you engage in today. You would have been baptized. You would have taken Communion, confessed, eaten the eucharist. If you lived in Egypt 3,000 years ago, you would have had your body embalmed, waiting on the day that you arose to get into heaven, just like you do today. These are old, silly ideas that we should have abandoned by now.

T: *Well, then, you do deny the existence of God?*

A: We can do better than that. We can prove, with the general use of scientific historical process, that there never was a Jahveh, a Jehovah, an Elohim, an Adonai, or an "I Am that I Am;" that there never was a Jesus Christ.

You see, when you say "do you deny," you are asking us to prove a negative proposition. When you say "the existence of god," you are making a positive assertion. Let us give you an example.

Suppose we say that we believe in a tooth god, that we worship this god, communicate with the tooth god by mastication, that we know our prayers are answered, and that in the next life we will become lower bicuspid molars if we live an ethical life now and worship our tooth god as we should. Prove to us that this is not true.

T: *I can't prove that isn't true. I think it's insane, but —*

A: Well, you are getting the picture. You can erect any kind of a god idea and god system of worship in your imagination and then turn to someone else and say, "Prove that this isn't so," or you can say, "Do you deny the existence of my god?" There must be some criterion for the proof.

T: *Well, what is that criterion?*

A: There is an assortment of criteria. The religious community in the United States today says that all one needs is "faith." This proves god to many people. The fundamentalists and the evangelicals usually ask for everyone to believe on "faith." Actually, that "faith" is rooted in some kind of authority. This entire thing of "arguments" for the god idea is very thoroughly covered in the booklet *Why I Am An Atheist*, written by Madalyn O'Hair and available from American Atheists.

In this booklet she talks about the rational or so-called reason based arguments for god: the teleological, the ontological, the cosmological, the entropic, the ethical, the pragmatic, the authoritarian. It's an interesting survey, you ought to pick up the booklet and read it.

T: *To get back to my original question: Do you deny the existence of God?*

A: Let's move from specific gods, like your Jesus Christ whom we can

lay to rest quite easily. You should get a copy of Madalyn O'Hair's *Jesus Christ — Super Fraud*, which very easily exposes that the idea of a Jesus was a fraud upon the times, a fraud which concretized in a power struggle to dominate humankind.

What about the generic god idea? This always had several aspects to it.

First, the gods which are invented are outside or above or in addition to nature. Therefore, they were all thought of as being "super" natural. *Super* is a Latin prefix for words, meaning "over, above, on top of." Since all we know is nature, to put a god outside of the framework of everything we know was rather smart, for it put the god outside of humankind's ability to affirm. God is not a part of nature. God is apart from nature. There are immediate logical questions which arise from such a notion, but let's look at this from the position of the person who invented the god — a rather primitive human.

Second, if there was a god which existed outside of nature, the god could prove that (s)he was there by breaking natural laws, even if only for a millisecond. The breach of the natural law, called a miracle, has always been a proof of god. So, if a natural event could be set aside even only for this millisecond, this would show that someone could tinker with nature from an outside position, just as you can be an outside force working on sand in order to build a castle in the sand . . . something the sand could never do itself. So, all god ideas have been attended by the idea of miracle.

The big question is, however, why have a god out there? What is the purpose of that god insofar as humankind is concerned?

Third, to answer that, it was necessary to communicate with the god that was invented in order to see what (s)he wanted, to see why (s)he was there. The communication came to be stylized and then called prayer. But, in all religions only certain people could address the god through prayer and that was the priesthood.

Fourth, therefore the idea of "agents" of god developed and a certain special group of persons came to be recognized as very special since they claimed to have the ability to directly communicate with this god (outside of nature) by the special exercise of prayer. Many people do not understand it but the nature of the revolution in religion which Martin Luther (1483-1546) caused in the Western world was with his idea that no intermediary was necessary. He felt that anyone could just pray directly to god without a special agent doing this for people.

You can see that the idea of god immediately became compounded. Something was out there. It could prove it was out there by interfering

in natural law and it expected to be in communication with the human community for some reason.

Fifth, a very peculiar supernatural form of communication was developed, outside of the standard and accepted modes. This was called "prayer" and had to do with an instant communication of ideas between the super-thing and the persons who accepted that it existed. We'll talk about the idea of prayer, or "instant god-communication" later because it is a very special and peculiar idea.

Sixth, very quickly the idea developed that this communication needed to be in a certain place. Therefore "holy" places came into being. For instance, you go to church on Sunday and you attend with a group of persons who congregate there and it is felt that this place is sanctified and is closer to this god than — say — your home. And, in this place, some stylized forms of addressing this god developed. Examples are hymn singing, unison responses to the priests, body posture, getting on one's knees, bowing one's head, or closing one's eyes. Special ideas about body coverings developed. Women are still supposed to cover their heads to go into a church. The priest wore garments which made him look different from ordinary people, so that he could be set apart from them.

Why would all this be necessary? Why should there be a special, important, or "holy" place at which to gather? Why should this force which was greater even than nature have "agents" acting for it in the human community? Why should there be communication between this thing, whatever it was, and people?

Seventh, the answer which was presented was that this super-thing wanted people to act in a certain way. So, a system of rewards and punishments was dreamed up. The thing, having forgotten to program into people's DNA how they should act, had to give verbal instructions, generally through its agents, and through the special communication of its agents because of their supplicating prayers. Now if this super-thing knew the actions of its created people it would not need an agent to communicate with it to tell it what was going on. But, that did not dawn on the persons inventing the scheme.

Therefore, *eighth*, a reward and punishment system was put into effect, operating both in life and in death. In life if you did what the super-thing desired you to do, your "prayers were answered." If not, your "prayers were not answered." In death if you had done in life what the super-thing desired you to do, you were sent to heaven. If not, you were sent to hell.

Ninth, in order to initiate you into these "mysteries" of the super-

thing idea, there were all kinds of stylized rituals you had to perform at the threshold of acceptance. These have always included drinking mystery potions, eating mystery things, being baptized, being circumcised, inducing trances.

Tenth, the whole thing rests on acceptance of the authority of the priest class and therefore, immediately, support for that class was necessary.

So, *eleventh*, the priest class was freed from work, from warfare, from other duties and obligations which were on people in general if they lived in a group, or a tribe, or a nation, or a country.

Twelfth, in addition, the idea of tithing (financial support), special giving to this priest class, was grafted on the entire idea set. This gave this priest class more time since those in the priest class did not need to earn a living, did not need to participate in the obligations of society, and therefore had plenty of time to think up more weird ideas to fortify their position, to overcome any arguments about their freeloading on all of the people.

Thirteenth, from all of this developed the idea of "cursing." If you complained against giving a part of your wherewithal to this priest class, it would curse you, abjure you, anathematize you, expulse you, excommunicate you, so that you could not be a part of the regular community of humankind. You were set apart, ostracized, when the human community had just discovered the need for unity and cohesion.

All theistic systems have either all or part of these ideas. Usually, it is all. An Atheist examining this generic idea of god can see immediately the fraud in it.

T: *Well, then you DO deny the existence of God.*

A: The Atheist position is that there is no specific god, now, such as your Jesus Christ, or your Jahveh, or Jehovah, or Elohim, or Adonai, or the "I Am that I Am," nor has there ever been such a specific god. There never was a Zeus, or a Thor, or a Pallas Athena, or an Allah, or a Ra. These are all fictitious.

Now, when we get to the generic idea of god the Atheist position is that this is nonsense. It is a figment of the imagination of primitive man. *There is no god now and there never has been any.* We would like to add even to that and say, either generic or specific. We cannot deny the existence of something that never was, nor is not now.

T: *This may sound funny to ask you, but I have to make it clear to*

myself. Then, you don't "believe" in God?

A: Atheists don't "believe" in anything. We don't believe in geology. That is a scientific discipline describing the physical features of the earth. The earth, with its features, and the science which describes those features exist apart from our belief or nonbelief in them. Atheists don't "believe" in mathematics. We accept the method, which is all mathematics is — a method. Atheists don't "believe" in chemistry. We accept interactions and interrelationships which we see demonstrated. All of science is objective reality, demonstrable through reason and experiment.

T: *But you do believe in yourself?*

A: Oh, come now! We can demonstrate ourselves. We are made of so much organic matter. We have physical dimensions: height, weight, volume, density. We know that our brains are physical repositories for the experiences of life we have had, along with our genetic inheritances. We accept that we "are."

T: *What happens to you then when you die?*

A: Death is the cessation of vital functions of an organism. In the human animal, when the brain is permanently impaired, or ceases to function through the death process, the unique individual personality of that person disappears. Its existence ceases. The body immediately begins to rot and that is the end of it. We see this everywhere about us. Leaves die on trees. Flowers and bushes die. Weeds die. Our pets die. Animals die everywhere or we purposely kill them for our food. You constantly see human beings die. Members of your family die. You will die, too. You can't escape it.

T: *My soul is going to unite in heaven with Jesus Christ.*

A: O.K. Let us give you an example of soul. You have a tape recorder, don't you?

T: *Yes.*

A: You record music on it. The music on that tape could perhaps, as an analogy, be called a "soul." When you erase the tape, what happens

to the "soul," the music? If you happen to drop the tape in a fire and it burns and is destroyed, where has the music gone? When the physical basis of the human body no longer exists, the memory bank or the chemical and neuron tracking patterns of the brain are destroyed, what you call your "soul" is gone. We call this brain storage pattern, housed in a certain type of physical plant, a body, "a unique individual."

But, then of course, your dog is unique, too. He has memory patterns, learned patterns. If you have two dogs you know how uniquely different they are, one from the other.

It is utter nonsense to talk about your soul uniting with anything. Your unique patterns can only be realized through your unique body and your unique brain, marked with its unique experiences.

T: *I know that I will live again.*

A: That means it is time for us to ask you a question. When you are floating around in some ephemeral part of the universe, with what eyes will you see? With what ears will you hear? With what brain will you comprehend? With what hands will you touch?

T: *I can do that without a body or a brain; God will find a way.*

A: This is simply a flight of fancy on your part. All we know is life. No one has ever experienced anything but life. This is the only reality we know. It is obvious to us by observance, by the use of reason and by scientific testing that you cannot talk to anyone who is dead.

Just as you were not a unique individual before you were conceived in your mother's womb, you will not be a unique individual after you have died. There was nothing before; there is nothing afterwards.

Also, actually, you are very uninterested in being a nebulous blob floating around somewhere. You want to have consciousness, your own personality, your own ideas. You are totally uninterested in being a fleck in a universe, unseeing, unknowing, unfeeling, and unthinking.

These are all nonsense ideas. This is why the Atheist repeats and repeats that you must have a good life now. You must realize your total potential now. You must be involved in living. The religious idea of using this life as a preparation for dying is psychotic. Life is for living; not for preparing to die.

T: *Alright. Suppose that I am right and you are wrong. If I am right I am going to spend an eternity in heaven. You, meanwhile, will spend*

eternity in hell. Therefore, I will win the wager of whether there is life after death.

A: We expect our opponents to know what they are talking about. We warned you at the beginning of this, that we would correct you, or give you the information you needed, when you are in error. Your question reveals to us that you have not researched this at all. For this is what is classically known as "Pascal's Wager."

Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) was a French religious philosopher. One of the earliest tales about him was that he was bewitched as a youngster and freed from the spell by the witch with strange ceremonies. He later became a Jansenite and informed to the authorities against the unorthodoxy of a Capuchin friend. Later, he abandoned the world to become a religious recluse; later still he died from a lesion of the brain. His works, *Pensees*, which were published posthumously, were confused, chaotic, and incoherent. He posed your question to the doubters of his time.

The answer, of course, is obvious. Pascal, as would you, strictured the only life he knew, or experienced, to take a gamble on another life, unknown and after death. The Atheist lives fully, richly, deeply, completely, NOW. He does not circumscribe himself with fears, doubts and anxieties. The Atheist knows that "what you see is what you get." We live our lives while, unfortunately for you, you waste yours planning to "live" after your body and your personality are destroyed.

T: *That answer is not good enough for me. I know that my Lord will not fail me. And, up in heaven, I am going to watch you suffer in hell.*

A: Indeed, the idea of Christian love has always been one of watching suffering with glee. Much of this is predicated in the New Testament, with Jesus Christ almost licking his lips over the idea of agonizing suffering in an eternal hell. We Atheists are free from all such sadistic ideas. We enjoy human life.

T: *You don't believe in hell?*

A: Again, we have no "belief systems." Demonstrate to us convincingly that there is a hell and we will accept it. In the absence of the demonstration we must recognize the idea of hell as an absurdity.

Of course, there were many earthquakes and many volcanic eruptions in the Middle East, where most of the religions were born and the

hot lava pouring out of the earth, when the only place that primitives had to bury one another was in the earth, must have fixed in their minds that there was a hell's fire under the earth. They feared what was demonstrated to them: volcanic fires.

T: *I suppose you also don't believe in the Devil?*

A: Once again, demonstrate to us convincingly by objective reality that there is a devil and we will accept it. Even if you demonstrate it logically, either by Aristotelian syllogistic or Socratic dialectic logic, we would accept it.

You have never offered any kind of proof. All that all religions have ever done is to make a bald-faced statement — only that and nothing more. Since we can read human history for at least 5,000 years and not find a demonstration anywhere of a devil, it is unlikely that we would accept your protestations, which are, essentially, all you have available to you.

T: *You are an agent of the devil! You are possessed with evil!*

A: Come now, you are being quite childish with name-calling of a real idiotic nature. We are choosing our words carefully when we say that there is no such thing as a devil, or Satan, or a demon, or demon possession. As Atheists, we will even go further and say that there is no such thing as a "sin."

T: *We are all sinners before the Lord!*

A: The Atheist makes mistakes in life and we try to correct them, but we do not put an emotional charge on our mistakes and then wallow around in guilt feelings for the rest of our lives, striking our breasts and yelling "mea culpa" (through my fault).

The Atheist does the very best he can do in any situation. The only rule of thumb that we have is really a legal concept, the idea of "the reasonably prudent man." A reasonably prudent man knows that there are consequences of his actions and he acts in such a way that those consequences do not cause first himself and secondly others any harm.

Religion, with its definitional absolutes, cannot rest with the idea of an individual making mistakes, but adds to this the notion of "sinning."

T: *We Christians have the golden rule. That is our guide.*

A: But your so-called Christian golden rule has been around in the human community since time immemorial. Before Christianity came into being the religions of the Far East had such a rule. It was even a part of the secular law of the land in some regions. For example, the sixth ruler of the first dynasty of Babylon, Hammurabi, born about 1792 B.C., who died about 1750 B.C., had a set of laws which were chiseled into a stone stele which has been found on the banks of the Euphrates River. This contained the so-called golden rule. So, also, did the ideas of K'ung Fu-tzu (Confucius), who lived from 551 B.C. to 479 B.C.. Many historians accept that Krishna (Chrisna), who lived 2,000 years B.C., also promulgated this "rule." There is nothing new or different or special or "Christian" about it. It is an idea which the human community found appealing in all ages of humankind.

T: *Nonetheless, we are moral. You Atheists are completely amoral. You can commit any crime, live in any way, and there is nothing to stop you.*

A: There is a great impediment to our living in a criminal way: *we use our reason*! We know nothing of morals, that is true, since "morals" have to do with sinning, guilt, and anxiety. We are "ethical."

There could not be a meaner, more despicable reason for good conduct than a reward system. Surely you don't use this with your children? Do you tell them that if they are good they will get a lollipop and if they are bad they will get a beating? That is what Christianity is all about. If you live a moral life, whatever that is, and we can talk about that too, you get to go to heaven. If you live an immoral life, you get to go to hell.

We Atheists can live good, rich, full lives, be decent citizens, kind parents, good neighbors, fulfilled mates, honest business people simply with the use of reason and understanding as a guide.

T: *You are fornicators and sinners!*

A: Of course, you would mention fornication. Almost every "sin" in the Bible and in Christianity has to do with sex. The physical urgings of our bodies are held against us by Judeo-Christianity. This has led to extraordinary perversions in humankind. The most beastly was the system of torture used in the Inquisition.

You should be disgusted with the idea of morality which your religion preaches to you. It is anti-human.

With Atheists, on the other hand, if we do make a mistake, we are merely mistake-makers and because we have done an undesirable deed we learn from that and we try to correct ourselves and make fewer mistakes in the future. But the religious picture themselves as miserable sinners who must punish themselves severely — perhaps eternally in hell — simply for being a fallible human being. This is masochism. The religious person deliberately inflicts pain on himself in order that he may guiltlessly permit himself to experience some kind of pleasure. Prayer, confession, flagellation, are all guilt-soothing rituals by which a religious person gives himself permission to enjoy a small part of life.

T: *You are trying to convert me to your way of thinking. Why do you insist on converting?*

A: Ah! please listen as we talk. The Atheist has *never* in human history, and does not now, try to convert anyone to his way of thinking. If you are religious — stay that way. You are not intellectually mature enough to join our ranks.

T: *If you aren't trying to convert me and others like me, why are you appearing on television and radio?*

A: We are invited guests on these programs. We want to reach Atheists in the United States so that they may know that when they are required to check off religious preferences, such as Roman Catholic, Jew, Protestant, that there is another category which is "None of the above." We want *Atheists* to know that they are not alone. There are millions and millions of us. They need not be cowed by the religious community of the United States any more.

And we want to talk about conversions. The basic premise of Christianity is intolerance. The Christian cannot just have his belief and permit everyone else to have theirs. Jesus Christ demanded that the Christian convert and this has caused more grief to mankind than any other religion. The old pagan gods lived side by side. But when Christianity came with its exclusivism, based on the first of the ten commandments, "Thou shalt have no other God before me," the killing began.

T: *That is not true. Christianity is a religion of love. We want you to know the love of Jesus Christ.*

A: No, it is not. That is exactly our point; it is a religion of hatred of any ideas except its own. The intolerance of Christianity has been manifested historically in a number of ways.

(1) Religious wars. We see this continuing strife today. Vietnam was a religious war in great part. Here, again, you should read the booklet put out by Madalyn Murray O'Hair which clearly develops this thesis from historic analysis. It is *War in Viet Nam, The Religious Connection.* What is going on in Ireland, in the Philippines, in the Middle East, in the Far East? The religious wars of Christianity have been a feature of the 1600 years of Christianity's reign.

(2) Akin to religious wars were the Crusades, when all of Europe was convulsed with these sorties which ended up with full-scale wars in the Middle East as the Christians tried to capture the so-called holy sites.

(3) What was the Inquisition when people were tortured and killed if they would not accept Christianity? The final count of most historians is that there were about 68 million persons killed by Christianity. Can you read the history of witch persecution, even in our own nation, without crying for pity for womankind?

(4) The entire idea of missionary work is a beautiful example of Christianity's intolerance. Missionaries were and still are being shipped around the world to go to specific cultures and tell the people that their historical and local gods are no good and that they must abandon them to accept Jesus Christ, Coca-Cola, and the ballpoint pen. The missionary is trained to subvert native religions in the backward nations of the world. This is insulting at least and a perversion of freedom of conscience at most.

T: *I will pray for you.*

A: (Laughing) But don't you see, this is the exact intolerance we have been discussing. You know that an Atheist does not pray since we do not accept that prayers are efficacious, there being no god. You plan to include us in your insanity whether we like it or not.

Do not pray for us. Do not take our name in vain. Please, exclude us from your psychotic behavior.

T: *You try to force us to do what you want. How dare you tell us we can't pray?*

A: It's a free world. If you want to waste your time in praying, waste your time. We don't care. We ask only that you do your own thing and exclude us.

T: *Well, you have stopped our prayers in the public schools. We can't pray there anymore.*

A: But, you see that is *not* true. Any time that you, or your children, in any public school, or any public building, or anywhere in any place, want to pray, you can pray. Just close your eyes, bow your head, and go to it.

But, you don't want to pray privately, you want the school to have an exercise of prayer with the official *imprimatur* (sanction) of government on it.

T: *It is our right to do that.*

A: No. It is not. You live in a country which is politically premised on a Constitution, which was drawn up with certain principles to which the country was expected to adhere. Those principles set us apart, as a nation, from any other country that had ever existed in the world. One of the founding principles was that there must be separation of state and church.

The Baptists of Danbury, Connecticut, wrote to Thomas Jefferson and asked him what the First Amendment to the Constitution was supposed to mean, and he replied to them and said that it was meant to erect "a wall of separation between church and state." The letter was written from Washington, D.C., to the Danbury Baptist Association on January 1, 1802, when Jefferson was in his first term as president of the United States.

Religion is a private affair. The idea of free, public, universal education funded by tax money is of a political and secular nature. Our school system was predicated on the teaching of "reading, writing and arithmetic" — not on the teaching of religion. When religion first tried to intrude itself into the public schools, the great educator, Horace Mann, fought to exclude it and our beginning nation agreed with him as far back as the early 1800s when our nation was just getting along. As long as the First Amendment principle of state/church separation is a part of the highest law in the land — the Constitution, the Bill of Rights — you do not have a right to pray in the public schools.

T: *What right did Madalyn O'Hair have, as an individual, to remove prayer from the public schools? Who does she think she is?*

A: Madalyn O'Hair did not remove Bible reading and prayer recitation

from the public schools. The United States Supreme Court did that in an 8-1 decision (*Murray v. Curlett*) in June, 1963, after the question had been in the United States court system for four years.

T: *The United States Supreme Court does not have the right to stop me from praying.*

A: The United States Supreme Court is not stopping you from praying, either. What the court ruled was that the reverential reading of the Bible and the unison recitation of the King James version of the Lord's Prayer constituted "a religious ceremony" and that religious ceremonies are not proper in the public schools, where all children are required to be in attendance.

T: *You see, that O'Hair woman and the Warren Court did this. They are stopping my children from praying in schools.*

A: Once again, no one is stopping you from praying. You can pray in church, can't you?

T: *Well, yes.*

A: In your home, in your yard, in your car?

T: (Reluctantly) *Yes.*

A: If your child is sitting in his home room, or in any classroom, he can bow his head and say a prayer, can't he?

T: (Reluctantly) *Yes.*

A: He can pray in the school library, out on the playground, in the locker room, the gymnasium, in the halls, anywhere he wants to pray, can't he?

T: *That is not the same as having a prayer before class. We have the right to have a prayer before class with everyone participating in it.*

A: No, you do not. Not in our country. You cannot, here, mix religion and government. If you want private, voluntary prayer, you have it, anywhere and anytime. But, you do not really want that. You want

governmentally sponsored and endorsed prayer, especially in the tax supported public schools.

In addition, we wonder about all of you religious folk. Are you a Christian?

T: *Yes, I'm a Christian and proud of it.*

A: You follow the teachings of Jesus Christ?

T: *Of course, I follow his teachings.*

A: What was his greatest sermon?

T: *Why, the Sermon on the Mount. Everyone knows that.*

A: Yes, we know that's what's alleged. Do you remember that Sermon on the Mount?

T: *Of course I know his teachings!*

A: Let me ask you then what he had to say about hypocrisy.

T: *I can't recite something like that off the top of my head.*

A: Let us refresh your memory. When he was talking about hypocrisy he mentioned three activities of people which were hypocritical. In Matthew 6:1-4 he talks about the hypocrisy of giving alms in public. Let us read it to you:

> Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.
>
> Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
>
> But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:
>
> That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

That says it all about giving alms in public, doesn't it? You know the phrase, well, "let not thy left hand know what they right hand doeth."

T: *Of course, I know that. Everyone does. We follow the teachings of our saviour.*

A: Well, let me refresh your memory further, because still on the theme of hypocrisy, he goes on in this famous Sermon on the Mount and says in Matthew 6:16-18:

> Moreover when you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
>
> But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;
>
> That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

That says it for the hypocrisy of public fasting, too, doesn't it?

T: *Of course it does. I follow his teachings. I am no hypocrite. He taught me that I should not be one.*

A: Well, now let's go to the third item, which Jesus Christ apparently saw as a hypocritical act. He was a Jew, isn't that right?

T: *Yes, he was born as a Jew, but he went beyond that.*

A: That isn't the point at issue here. He was a Jew and the only "church" he knew was a synagogue, wasn't it?

T: *Of course he went to synagogue.*

A: Then, when he says "synagogue" that would mean "church" to you?

T: *Naturally, it would. But, so what?*

A: Well, it doesn't really matter that much; we just wanted to refresh your memory. Now, let's get to the other hypocrisy which Jesus Christ condemned. This is in Matthew 6:5-13.

> And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou has shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Be not therefore like unto them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

After this manner therefore pray ye:

Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
in earth, as *it is* in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever. Amen.

So, why do you Christians know more than Jesus Christ?

T: *Me? Jesus?*

A: He preaches in his Sermon on the Mount that you should not even pray in church. (He says synagogue.) How can you go into your closet and close the door and in private pray if you are trying to force this to be in public, in our public schools, with everyone coerced into that prayer?

T: *I didn't know Jesus Christ said that. You're taking this out of context. I know you. You fight dirty.*

A: Will you please pick up your Bible and read Matthew, chapter 6, and all the chapters around that?

T: *The devil can quote scriptures for his own purpose. We have always had prayer in schools.*

A: Unfortunately for your argument that is not the case. Prayers really were put into public school at the beginning of the day in the early 1900s, approximately after the First World War. There were very early

fights about this too, because the prayer was usually this so-called Lord's Prayer from the Protestant, King James version of the Bible. The Jews were against this prayer because they are still waiting on their messiah and they don't accept that Jesus Christ was it. The Roman Catholics' Lord's Prayer, from the Douay Bible, is different than the Protestant version and they did not want to recite the Protestant version. Certain fundamentalist groups follow the teachings of Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount and don't want to pray in public at all.

There should not be religious strife in our schools at all. All parents can give their children the religious education of their choice, in their homes and in their churches or synagogues, but the public school is no place for "religious ceremonies."

T: *I don't care about any of that. The majority of the people NOW want prayer returned to the public schools and what the majority wants in our country is what is right.*

A: Again, you simply are in error. The majority has never been right. The majority permitted children to work in mines and in cotton mills. The majority refused to give suffrage to women. The majority refused to free the slaves. The majority permitted illiteracy in our nation.

It is always an enlightened minority which fights for the basic rights of humankind, which expands justice and tries to ameliorate the condition of humankind.

Furthermore, our nation was founded on certain basic principles which were set forth as enduring. Let us read to you what the United States Supreme Court has said about the Bill of Rights, for example.

> The very purpose of a Bill of Rights was to withdraw certain subjects from the vicissitudes of political controversy, to place them beyond the reach of majorities and officials, and to establish them as legal principles to be applied by the courts. One's right to life, liberty, and property, to free speech, a free press, freedom of worship and assembly, and other fundamental rights may not be submitted to vote; they depend on the outcome of no elections.

This was a theme in the case titled *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 87 L.Ed. 1628, 63 S.Ct. 1178 (1943). This case involved some school children who were from families which were Seventh-Day Adventists. The children, at the behest of their parents, refused to salute the flag of the United States because their religion taught that they should not and could not recognize a

graven image (the flag) and that the law of god was superior to the laws of man. Therefore when the school ordered the flag to be saluted, the parents brought suit.

This was a difficult case, especially since it came up during the time of the Second World War. But, the decisions emphasized that ours is a nation which protects the rights of the minority — even down to a minority of one. The majority cannot trample at will on those rights. Ours is not a majoritarian society and it is good that it is not, for the majority of our people have always held back on social reforms and on rights of the minorities. We only need to recall to you that plight of Blacks in our land, or the American Indians, or women, or other minorities.

T: *I'll ask you a different question then. How do you think you got here?*

A: We don't know about you, but in the case of Atheists, we were born because our mothers and fathers fornicated.

Again, we admonish you that if you don't know how to put your questions, we will correct you. What you meant to ask and did not know how to ask is the question: whence was life derived?

That has been answered over and over again and is being answered daily in laboratories all over the world. Organic compounds are made from inorganic constantly.

Microbiology and organic chemistry have or will have all the answers you need. Pick up any good textbook on either.

T: *Where did the universe come from, then? Where did all the inorganic material come from? God made it. God created the world.*

A: When we Atheists don't know the answer, we say so. And, neither Atheists nor scientists know (1) *if* the universe was created and (2) how, if it was. We don't even know what is meant by the word "universe." That is all beyond our knowledge at the present.

However, we will find the answer. Remember that once tuberculosis, or appendicitis, or the plagues were thought to be the punishment of god for the sins of mankind. We found out that this was rubbish. We know about tuberculosis and appendicitis and measles and other contagious diseases. At one time we did not know about molecules, or atoms, or neutrons, or miniscule parts and charges of the same. We find out through systematic study of the problems with a scientific

approach.

We will find out what the universe is and everything else about it, but that will come from science, specifically from astronomy, from astrophysics, from space exploration. No knowledge is going to come from reading a number of short books written by some bare-assed, half-starved, protein-deficient, illiterate Jews wandering around in a desert in a nomadic tribe, hallucinating from the oppressive conditions and climate in which they tried to eke out an existence.

You theists cover your ignorance with one word. You say, "god" did it. Anything you don't understand, "god" did it. The Atheist says, let's tackle the problem here and find out what makes this tick. Let's see what happened. Let's see how we can solve the riddle. The Atheist approach is not alone more sophisticated, but more fruitful.

If we had only you religious people finding answers, we still would not know how to light a match.

T: *Where did everything come from if God didn't produce it?*

A: *That* is the question. Scientists are still working on the answer. Religion insists that it has the answer already.

T: *That's because the answer is God.*

A: No. It isn't. It's because the scientists are more careful about making bald, unsupported statements than the religious are. Throughout mankind's existence, religious persons have contrived any number of absurd ideas. Primitive, scientific, materialist-minded men have had many invalid concepts. Some of them tried but science and the technology needed for continuing scientific research had a very slow beginning and growth — much of that due to the animosity of religion which inhibited it. But, we can't go over everything here from the Flat Earth theory through the Ptolemaic theory that the earth was the center of the universe. It is simply important that you Bible-thumping people read something other than just the Bible. These unsupported guesses occupied the attention of our historically naive world cultures throughout the ages.

T: *These ideas weren't important then and they aren't important now. I believe in what the Pope says. He knows. He said when he visited the shrine of Fatima in Portugal that science and technology and materialism would make all of the people into "automats without a*

face, an amorphous depersonalized mass."

A: Do you know what "amorphous" means?

T: *I don't need to know. I trust the Pope.*

A: The word is from the Latin and it means "having no form." You are neither without a face nor without a form. Everyone's own individual unique life will always be precious to them no matter what science or technology accomplishes. Don't fall for these grandiose sweeping statements. Your pope probably meant "automatons" — robots.

You have to know what they mean and to understand that the religious leaders want to remain in a position of power and wealth.

You asked us whence everything came and already you stray from the answer we try to give.

T: *That's because you never answered.*

A: At the root of it all, we think now, is an incorrect assumption that there was a time when "nothing" existed. This is a so-called period of "void," before the subsequent "creation" of all natural things, of what you call "something." The religionists, such as yourself, must have this "nothingness" period in order to justify a then-necessitated omnipotent creator. And, you are all careful to avoid saying how your creator came into being from that void.

All of our scientific inquiry is now showing us that "existing things" can only be transformations and modifications of preceding existing things. It was the realization of this that led to the establishment of what is called "the first law of physics."

T: *You spout off these references and I'm supposed to know them all. I don't remember "the first law of physics." I've been out of school awhile, you know, fellow.*

A: We're sorry. We try to explain as we go along. It's hard when we have a minute or two to answer only before some new question comes up. The first law of physics is that neither matter nor energy can be created or destroyed, only transformed. It is a recognition that the sum total of matter (or energy) is always going to remain the same. That's the best way we can put it.

Let us say it this way: all we know is the material world.

Religion has created an imaginary world which exists outside of and beyond this material world. Religion lives in fantasy. Science and Atheists live in this real, objective, verifiable world. Theists live in a make-believe world.

T: *God made the universe. Say what you want to say, but God made it. Look at your wristwatch. How did that get there? It had to have a designer. Our world with all its design and its complexity could never have gotten here unless someone had a plan for it.*

A: Once again, you don't know where you got your argument, or who made it originally. This is "Paley's Evidence" for god. William Paley (1743-1805) was an English divine. He gave the watch argument as evidence of "an intelligent designing mind" behind the universe. Actually, he took the idea from Cicero's *De natura deorum*, and Marcus Tullius Cicero wrote this about 77 B.C. to prove the pagan gods of Rome. Cicero, who lived 106-43 B.C., naturally wrote years before Christianity came into being. But if this argument is true, then a wily mind deliberately programmed evil, hatred, illness, death, and catastrophes into the world.

But even the watch in his argument had evolved, from man watching the shadow of a sundial to his being able to slowly and deliberately keep a systematic record of time. The watch did not come full-blown to the human community, but like all else evolved slowly and painfully over a millenium of years from an idea to a watch in hand. Even in our times it evolves further as the watch now becomes digital, motion-powered, more accurate.

You stumble and fall when you premise an omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent (all knowing, all powerful, all good) god, who planned it all in advance. It will not do to say that the universe was designed and therefore it must have a designer. There must first be proof that it was "designed." It will not do to say that the universe has a "plan"; that plan must be demonstrated. One cannot blithely assert that there was an infinite maker. The idea that a design must have a beginning and that a designer need not, but can be rather a vague force somewhere, sometime, is simply an expression of human ignorance.

T: *Where do you get off, talking to me like this? Who do you think you are?*

A: Atheists are caring people who take the time to try to find answers.

We are all educated. Some of that education is formal education in schools, colleges, and universities, some of it is from the education we all receive just from living. Some of the education is from our own extensive reading and exploration of all possible sides to a question.

T: *Oh yeah! Well, my opinion is just as good as your opinion.*

A: No, it is not. You are not entitled to an opinion on anything if you have not explored all of the facets of the question. A religious person most often inherits his opinion about religion. You are often as not a Methodist because your parents were Methodists. When you change religions, sociological studies indicate that you do this most often because of sex. If you are a Baptist and marry a Lutheran, whichever one is the most strong in religion influences the other to accept the new brand. You switch back and forth in the Christian denominations. There are currently 257 different brands of Protestantism in the United States.

If you would walk down the street right now and find a Baptist and ask him what a Lutheran believes, he could not tell you. If you asked a Roman Catholic about a Jew, you would get a blank stare. If you asked an Episcopalian about a Presbyterian, you would receive no answer.

Nothing can be substituted for education and research. You are only entitled to an opinion if you work on it. When we need a broken leg set, neither your opinion nor your experience is as good as your doctor's. If you want to have an opinion in regard to religion or in regard to Atheism we expect you to arm yourselves with some history, some facts, some theoretics and with the power of reason.

T: *What right have you to appear on the air and talk like this? If you want to be an Atheist, stay at home. Keep your opinion to yourself.*

A: You have the right to turn the dial. There is no reason for you to listen to us at all. We are on the airways because we are invited guests of this station, and because — in the United States — we have a protected right which is called "Freedom of Speech." We represent a particular position in respect to religion and have a right to voice that position.

T: *You are Communists. That's what you are.*

A: Oh! that old red herring, again. The nation got over playing "McCarthyism" back in the 1950s.

In any event, Communism is a socio-economic political system. Atheism is a position taken in respect to religion. The one is completely separate from the other. One could exist without the other, and has — since Atheism has been around for thousands of years and Communism is only about 100 years old.

T: *You can't fool me. All Atheists are Communists.*

A: Well, you don't know your American history either, do you? Do you know that all of the persons I am about to name were or are Atheists? Tell me if you think any of them were Communists: Henry Ford, Andrew Carnegie, Clarence Darrow, Luther Burbank, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Thomas Alva Edison, Mark Twain, H. L. Mencken, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson.

T: *At least I know that Russia is Communist and Atheist.*

A: But, Italy is Roman Catholic and Communist. Poland is Roman Catholic and Communist. Hungary is Roman Catholic and Communist. Greece just voted in a Marxist government with its Greek Orthodox Church and so did France. And, France has always been called the daughter of the church, a special Roman Catholic nation. Spain, Portugal, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium all are predominantly Marxist now. There is not a nation in Europe that does not subscribe in whole or in part to Marxism.

Throughout Latin and Central America the only religion permitted is Roman Catholicism and those nations will all be Marxist in another ten years.

Get your head out of the sand.

Would you call Japan a Marxist country?

T: *Of course not.*

A: But the populace there is about 65% Atheistic. You cannot say that all Atheists are Communists or even that all Communists are Atheists. Not any more.

We know our organization, American Atheists, because we do enough sociological research with it. The organization has been about 65% Republican, about 30% Democrat and the other 5% is made up of Objectivists, Libertarians, Radical Righters, and Anarchists.

If one considers that momentarily, one can see the thinking behind it

almost immediately. An Atheist is independent before anything else. He does not rely on authority, or on anyone else. Therefore, he is going to be a small businessman or a professional man where he answers to no one, where he has no boss. And, we do have a great number of proprietors of their own businesses in the organization. Most of these people think of themselves as Republicans. We don't know if they actually vote that way, because we feel it would be improper of us to ask.

T: *You evaded my question about the universe. Even the scientists recognize that God made the universe.*

A: What a statement! That's news to us.

T: *What do you think the "Big Bang" theory is? God did that banging. He created the whole thing.*

A: Stop right there. If there was a big bang, what banged? There needs to have been something before everything was created in that big bang so that the big bang could do its thing. In addition, not only are there other theories but the Big Bang cosmology itself lays no claim to being the only possible description of the universe. The Big Bang theorists say that this theory does not answer all the questions. They admit that it has not as yet resolved three fundamental issues: (1) what happened prior to the initial instant, (2) the nature of the incident itself — for instance, if it was in singularity or if it was a multi-bang, and (3) the origin of the galaxies. Those are all rather significant questions to be left unanswered.

Of course, those of you who are Christians can always fall back on "Saint" Augustine, who said that prior to the creation there existed a hell for those who raised awkward questions such as "What was there?"

T: *I don't have an awkward question. I know in my heart that God created that Big Bang. I also know that there are no other theories. You bluff constantly. You pretend to know what you don't know. You are NOT omniscient.*

A: We not alone know what we don't know but we know what we do know and we admit both areas.

T: *Admit your [sic] are wrong then about the Big Bang.*

A: We don't use words like they were magic. You shout "Big Bang" and that is supposed to settle it all. It's important to look past a slogan. Let's look at the whole thing. The Big Bang theory is in part based on the idea of the "Doppler effect." This is a shift to the red in the spectrum reading of stars. The idea is that the stars in the universe are moving out and away from us and as they move the light, or radiation, from them is characterized by a displacement of the spectral lines into the red area of the spectrum. This is caused by the relative movement of the star (or source) along the line of sight we have of it. If it were approaching us the results would be a blueshift; if it were receding from us the results would be a redshift. Since there is a redshift, certain scientists say that the stars are moving away from us, exhibiting the results of a Big Bang which is scattering them in all directions.

T: *You see! I knew it! That proves it right there.*

A: No, not so fast. There is one theory that what we are seeing in this redshift is "tired light." Some scientists say that light loses some of its energy in traversing space. A decrease in what is called photon or light energy would result in an increase in wavelength or a reddening that would be proportional to the distance traversed.

T: *How do they know that? Does that happen on earth?*

A: There are no distances here on earth so great as the distance stars travel, dummy. And, no one knows if the laws of physics are the same in space as the laws of physics are in our planetary system — and we don't know even all of them here yet. Look at how surprised the space scientists were with the new information sent back from the space probe *Voyager* when it went around both Jupiter and Saturn.

T: *Then you don't know what you are talking about.*

A: Atheists know what they are talking about. We are talking about theories here, and theories are tentative speculations which are to be tested by scientific observation. With "tired light," theorists know that they are invoking a new law of physics to help them and they don't know if that new law is there or not. Scientists, unlike you Christians, admit that they don't have all the answers yet.

T: *If that's the only other theory, you are all in trouble. The Big Bang and God is really it.*

A: That isn't the only other theory. But, to continue with the Big Bang for a moment, the scientists are arguing about two aspects of that in addition to the three problems with it which we already mentioned. We are even going to say there are two different Big Bang theories. According to one, the universe is destined to expand forever. According to the other, the universe will eventually recollapse and probably bang again.

T: *Of course it will. The Second Coming of Christ will bring the collapse and the Big Bang. I am prepared for that and to live in the glory of God.*

A: Hold on. There may not be a collapse. This is all only a theory. Another theory is the one of Steady State. This was introduced in 1948 and holds that the "perfect cosmological theory" requires the universe to appear the same at all times. The Big Bang theory requires a universe which was much denser and hotter in the past than it is now.

T: *In other words, the scientists don't know what they are talking about.*

A: Theirs is an *educated* guess.

T: *Ours is not a guess. We have the words of God himself. It's all there in the Bible.*

A: If you will let me finish this explanation . . . the Steady State theory has three shortcomings. (1) There is a large increase in the number of faint radio sources and there are complicated explanations for this.

T: *I don't need any complicated explanations. I've read about those radio signals and I know that God is trying to warn us to depart from our evil and sinful ways.*

A: If you will let us go on . . . (2) The redshift seems to eliminate the idea of a Steady State, and (3) cosmic microwaves have been discovered which —

T: (Interrupting) *I don't want to go on with this. All you have are theories, theories, theories, while what I have is proof from the Bible. I have it right here in my hands. I can read to you that God created the heaven and the earth.*

A: If you absolutely insist on the Bible as proof for any cosmology theory you are in very serious difficulty. Are you certain that you want to try to pit this against science or Atheism?

T: *Yes. I know that this book has the answer.*

A: We Atheists are very averse to reducing ourselves to argument within the confines of your crazy book but if we must, we must. We warn you that it will be only for a reference or two but those will completely and absolutely rout your theory.

T: *You people are vicious. You'll take something out of context, as usual and —*

A: (Interrupting) You have your Bible. You can check out what we say. Take as much time as you need. Do as much research as you want to do, In fact, we'll ask you about it.

First question: What did god create on the first day?

T: *Why, he created the light and he divided it from the darkness, the void.*

A: "He" did that on the first day, before "he" did anything else?

T: *Yes. Right here, it says that in Genesis, chapter 1, verses 1 and 2. It even says he named them. In verse five it says here, "And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day."*

A: Then "he" went on to the second day, and the third — didn't "he?"

T: *Of course he did.*

A: Let's look at the fourth day, which is after the creation of light and dark, the earth, seas, skies, and vegetation. On the fourth day "he" created all heavenly bodies, including the sun and the moon. Of course, our earth is a heavenly body and that's been forgotten in this entire story. But, how could "he" have created light and dark on the first day, here on earth, without either a sun or a moon — which "he" did not create until the fourth day?

T: *It doesn't say that. You are misinterpreting.*

A: Read it. We'll leave it at that.

Let's go on to another question. Did god create beasts first or man first?

T: *Everyone knows the answer to that. He created Adam first.*

A: Please tell us then why it says in Genesis 1:25, 26, "And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle, after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let us make man in our image, and after our likeness." Then in verse 27 it concludes this thought with "So God created man in his own image and in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them." Then, in verse 28, it adds "And God blessed them and God said unto them, 'Be fruitful and multiply. . . .' "

Now the question is, what was created first, beasts or man?

T: *Where does it say that — it doesn't say that. It says right here in Genesis, chapter 2, in verses 18 and 20: "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam —"*

A: (Interrupting) Are you saying that god wanted Adam to have a mate from the fowls and the animals? What kind of a mate? A horse? A cow? A dog? An eagle?

T: *No, I didn't say that.*

A: Ah, but your Bible does. Because just where you stopped reading there in chapter 2, it goes on and in verse 19 it says, "And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam . . . but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him." It is evident that he was supposed to mate with a beast. When an appropriate beast could not be found, god had to take another course. Consequently, the lord puts Adam to sleep in verse 21 and produces a female companion out of his rib in verse 22.

Your Bible contradicts itself. In one place (Genesis 1:25, 26) beasts were created first and then humankind. In another place (Genesis, 2:7) one man was created first, then the beasts were created afterwards and

when the man could not find a mate among the beasts god was forced to make a female for him out of his own rib.

T: *I don't want to argue that. Anyway, why are you saying "beasts?" You should say "animal." An animal is an animal.*

A: Atheists are very specific in their ideas and their words. The word animal includes us and here god wanted Adam to mate with a beast, not another human animal. We are a part of the animal kingdom. We were trying to distinguish this. In fact, we belong to a specific branch of the animal kingdom. We are primates. This is an order which includes man, chimpanzees, apes, monkeys, lemurs, tarsiers, and marmosets. This is one of the reasons that we protest when any store or building carries a sign which says, "No animals." We are animals. So, we complain and ask that the sign be changed to "No pets."

T: *That's damn picky. In addition, we are not animals. We are special creations of God. I am not related to a monkey. Now, you might be, but I am not.*

A: We can get to that too. But let's conclude what we were talking about just now. We were talking about two different stories concerned with the so-called creation of man. There is an issue of human sexuality in all of this. In the first story, your god created man and woman together after he had created the beasts and he told them "to be fruitful and multiply" which was his way of saying that they should have sexual union. That was in Genesis 1:26-28. But in Genesis, chapter 2, they didn't know what their sexual organs were for until they ate some fruit and were driven out of the garden. Therefore we have several more questions for you. Did god create Adam with a scrotum and penis?

T: *You are filthy minded. Only you Atheists would think of such a dirty thing.*

A: We must press the question. If there was no woman contemplated and god passed beasts in review to find Adam a "help meet," why would god create a man with a scrotum and penis? Why would he create either the male or the female with sex organs if they were not to find out what to do with them? Remember that your holy book says that the original sin was sex and that after Adam and Eve ate the fruit — allegedly an apple, although the Bible does not actually say that — they both

suddenly knew they were naked and they covered up their sex organs. We repeat our question: for what reasons did your god make sex organs on Adam and Eve if they weren't supposed to use them?

T: *You are just filthy, degenerate people.*

A: No, we must go further. We have just read in your own Bible in Genesis 1:26 that god said he "made man in our image, after our likeness." Did god have a penis and scrotum?

T: *I think we should get off this subject. You Atheists turn everything into something degenerate.*

A: Come now. You are the one who swore by your Bible. This has nothing to do with so-called lewdness. It is nothing beyond an inquiry into your theory about how it all got started.

Also, we want to know exactly what your god meant by using the plural. Were there more gods than one?

T: *You know that there is only one God. Everyone in the world knows that there is only one God.*

A: Please explain something else to us then. You have the Bible there in front of you. What does it mean in Genesis 6:2: "That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."

This must mean that your gods fornicated and had sons.

T: *This is blasphemy. Someone should shut you people up. This is terrible. Imagine talking like this about God!*

A: Alright then, a different question: who was the mother of these gods of men?

T: *God is God. There was no mother. You intrude all of these ideas into a perfectly beautiful and true story.*

All this is is the usual preoccupation of you Atheists with sex. That's all you think about: the sins of the body.

A: How else can we survive as a species without reproduction? Yet, according to your Bible Adam and Eve did not fornicate until they were

driven out of the Garden of Eden.

T: *Where does it say that! Where does it say that!*

A: We'll read it to you: Genesis 3:23, "Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden . . ." and in the next verse, 24, "So he drove the man out . . ." That ends the third chapter of Genesis and the first line of the first verse in the fourth chapter says, "And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived, and bare Cain. . . ."

T: *You are dwelling on sex because you are foul-minded. Have the decency to go to another subject.*

A: Before we leave the subject of sex, there is one more question we need to ask. Eve and Adam had two sons, at first. One was Cain and one was Abel. So, there were just four persons in the world, a mother and father and their two sons. Then Cain killed Abel and after he did that, it says in Genesis 4:16, 17, "And Cain went from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived and bare Enoch." Who did Cain marry? The only woman on earth was Eve. Who mothered Enoch? Eve? Did Cain have intercourse with his own mother? What did Adam do about that?

T: *You have no right to talk about the Bible at all. You aren't a Christian. This is* ***our*** *book. It isn't your book. I refuse to discuss this with you further.*

A: Again, Atheists are not interested in arguing the Bible with you because it is easy to disprove over and over again anything that you say about it. We can do this from what is called "internal evidence," which means by just using the Bible itself. What we did just now, we can do 100,000 times over, for it is estimated that there are that many errors and contradictions in the Bible. You should really get a copy of either *The Bible Handbook for Atheists* or *The X-Rated Bible*, both of which are put out by American Atheists. Either will enlighten you.

What else do you want to ask?

T: *I want to talk about our country and how you Atheists are destroying it. What we need to be talking about here is our American history — our Christian heritage — and our American institutions. What right*

have you to try to take "In God We Trust" off the money?

A: We have the right given to us under the constitution of the United States and because we are a secular nation. Let me ask you, what was on our money when we began as a country?

T: *In God We Trust.*

A: Ah! but you see, that is not true at all. At first we had nothing on the money but the denomination. Then later we took our nation's slogan, *E Pluribus Unum* and put that on the coins. Do you know what *E Pluribus Unum* means?

T: *I don't care what it means.*

A: You need to care. It tells its own story. *E Pluribus Unum* is Latin and it means "from many comes one." That tells the story of the United States, for people of all lands and of all backgrounds come here and together they all became one as the United States.

T: *Isn't that sweet?*

A: Well, that phrase was important enough to put on our money. It was important as a rallying call to the nation. It is still on some coin pieces.

T: *So is "In God We Trust."*

A: There is a long history about the slogans on money and especially how the phrase "In God We Trust" was put on some coins, after 1865. You should read Madalyn O'Hair's pamphlet on this, *A Brief History of Religious Mottoes on United States Currency and Coins.*

The phrase was made mandatory to be put on all currency and coins under the McCarthy hysteria. Before McCarthy it never appeared on any paper money at all. The law making it mandatory was passed on July 11, 1955, and it was Public Law No. 140 of that session of Congress.

T: *Good. We need to recognize God.*

A: But, this is not a true statement. We are one nation, functioning under a Constitution which requires what Thomas Jefferson described

as "a wall of separation between state and church."

If we could get by as a nation from 1776 to 1955, we did not need to have the name of god put on currency 179 years later. Currency and coins are a medium of exchange, not a billboard for religious slogans.

T: *If you don't like it, use a check.*

A: That is not the solution. Let me ask you a question now. Suppose that Atheists get into power and have printed on the money and embossed on the coins of the land, "There is no god." What would you feel about that?

T: *I would refuse to use the godless things.*

A: But Atheists would not put you into a position like that. There is no other nation in the world that has religious slogans on its money. Money is a means of exchange. Would you want to carry coins or currency which said, "The only god is Allah"?

T: *I don't need to do that. The Christians are in the majority in the United States. If you don't like it here, why don't you go to Russia?*

A: We love it here. This is our nation. And, our nation has problems. Like Superman, Atheists fight for "truth, justice, and the American Way," but we also are trying to correct the wrongs we see.

One of the problems in our United States is with the religious gobbling up of land, businesses, radio and television bands. We want to make the public aware that 25 percent of all privately owned land is owned by religious organizations. Like it or not, this increases the tax on your land, therefore your mortgage payments are greater or, if you rent an apartment as most of our United States citizens do, your rent is higher by far because the churches have taken so much property out of the tax base.

T: *Well, that's about the only point you have going for you. Even as a Christian, I think that the churches should pay some taxes. But, my church pays tax on its land.*

A: Once again, you are factually incorrect. No church in any one of the United States pays any taxes on the church itself. Churches are exempt from taxation in every single state of the union. They are

exempt from tax on their income, from *ad valorem* taxes on their properties, from sales tax, from inheritance tax, from taxes on their stocks and bonds.

It is easy for an anonymous voice to come onto the airways and make claims, but it is much more difficult to produce a tax receipt. That is because you don't have one.

The schools of the United States are supported by *ad valorem* taxes. When the churches take as much land out of the tax base as they do, this means that our public schools are not being adequately financed. And, from this has come the call by the state governments upon the federal government to give assistance to the public schools at a state level. This increased burden of federal funding would not be necessary if the churches cared enough about the education of our children to pay their fair share of the tax burden.

T: *Let's get off this subject. What do you think about the Bible?*

A: We have made that very clear. The Bible is a compilation of trashy, incoherent, confabulated, incredible tales, poems, sagas, and pieces of dramas. It is full of hatred, murder, greed, falsehoods, lust, sado-masochism, absurdities, contradictions, stupidities. Need we go on?

T: *Don't you know that the Bible was written by God and that every word in it is inspired and divine?*

A: Since there is not now and never has been a god, it would be rather difficult for him to write a book. Incidentally, every religion in the world has claimed a sacred book. Your Bible is only one of these. Some of the other great sacred books are the Veda, the Koran, the Torah, the Upanishads, the Oahspe. Each one of them was "written by a god" too.

Actually, no god wrote any book at any time. That's obvious when one sees the conflicting claims of all these god books.

In respect to the Bible, your Judeo-Christian book, no one knows who wrote what, or where, or when. It is particularly difficult with the New Testament. There was no Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. It looks now as if there never was even a Paul. If there was, there is much debate over whether he did or did not write any of the letters ascribed to him.

T: *That is not true. We know the author of the Bible. It was God himself.*

A: Oh? In what language did he write? What was his nationality? Where did he write it and when?

T: *He spoke a universal tongue so that everyone could understand him. And there are just certain things that we need not know. We simply need to trust in God. All that's necessary is that we have the Bible now.*

A: If the most important thing is that you have the Bible now, then surely you must look at it. We will stand or fall on one direct order from god to his people. This is Deuteronomy 21:18-21.

> If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother and *that*, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them:
>
> Then shall his father and mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place;
>
> And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son *is* stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; *he is* a glutton and a drunkard.
>
> And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

Is this how you want to treat a disobedient son? Remember that this is a direct order from the lord and if you disobey it you are disobeying what has been ordered by god.

T: *That was the Old Testament. Jesus Christ changed all that.*

A: Then why did Jesus Christ say in Matthew 5:17, 18:

> Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil.
>
> For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

T: *You are taking out of context again. That is one little bitty thing and you are trying to make a federal case out of it.*

A: Not really, for Jesus Christ repeats this in Luke 16:17:

> And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

T: *I am not going to argue the scriptures with you. I know what they say. In addition, if you say that Jesus Christ never existed why are you quoting what he said?*

A: If I were going to talk about any fictitious character, for instance Scarlett O'Hara, in *Gone with The Wind*, I would need to know what this fictitious character said and did. I would need to know the entire story. I would be able to quote whatever I needed to quote in talking to someone who believed that Scarlett O'Hara was real.

T: *What about all of the prophecies of the Bible that have come true?*

A: What prophecies? They were generally written after the fact, so that is something occurred some prophet was manufactured 200 years before the event and the event was put into his mouth. When the Bible compilers were not doing that they were making prophecies so broad that they were bound to be interpreted as having come to pass earlier. We can prophesy too. "There will be wars and rumors of wars." That's our prophecy, and it is just as true now when we prophesy it as when it was prophesied in Matthew 24:6 and in Mark 13:7.

In fact, Mrs. O'Hair was prophesied in the Bible.

T: *Oh! my God! that's blasphemous. How dare you say something like that.*

A: Because it is true. In Matthew 12:42 and in Luke 11:31 it says that "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it." And, of course, Mrs. O'Hair's base is in Austin, Texas, which is just about as far south as you can get in the United States.

T: *All kind of TRUE prophecies have come from the Bible.*

A: Which ones? The prophecy which said that Adam and Eve should die "in the day that they eateth thereof" (Genesis, chapter 2, verse 17) if they ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge? They ate and they didn't die that day. They lived long lives and (allegedly) peopled the earth with their progeny. Or maybe you prefer the prophecy that David and his sons would rule forever, or that Solomon's throne would be everlasting, or that Jesus was to deliver the Jews from their foes? This is all foolishness. There was no Jahweh, no Jehovah, no Adonai, no Elohim,

no "I Am that I Am," no Moses, no Jesus. These are all fairy tales. We must depend on ourselves, on human reason, on science and on education. There is no god.

T: *All I can say to you is: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God."*

A: Do you know the cite for that?

T: *I don't go around learning the Bible by heart. It's in there.*

A: Yes, it is. It is in Psalms 14:1 and in Psalms 53:1.

T: *I knew it. See that! It says so twice.*

A: But let me tell you more.

T: *You would.*

A: Psalms are in the Old Testament. But, you as a Christian revere the New Testament more. So, you should read Matthew 5:22, which says:

> . . . whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

You have, therefore, just put yourself in danger of hellfire.

T: *I didn't call you a fool. I was just quoting scriptures.*
I don't know why you are on our back [sic]. Atheism is a religion, too.

A: Ah, but you see this is another fallacy. A little while ago we were talking about what a religion is. As an aside it is interesting to know that the word "religion" comes from the Latin, *religare*, which means "to tie back, to fasten or to bind."

But, religion is another word for theism. We have shown you that with all religions, there is a super-thing outside of nature, that it proves itself by miracles — which is the breaking of natural laws, that this super-thing has agents which communicate its wishes to people, that there is communication with the super-thing and usually rewards and punishments, stylized worship techniques. Atheism has none of these. There is nothing of religion associated with Atheism. We have no dogmas, no rituals, no gods, no priests, no worship, no prayer, no holy places.

Any dictionary or encyclopedia will tell you that religion is a system of attitudes, practices, rites, ceremonies, and beliefs by means of which individuals or a community put themselves in relation to god or to a supernatural world and often to each other, and from which the religious person derives a set of values by which to judge events in the natural world.

T: *There is a certain quality, a fervor.*

A: If you mean we are enthusiastic, we are. But enthusiasm has nothing to do with religion. A great number of Americans are enthusiastic about football or baseball, and the idea of religion is not associated with either football or baseball.

Often people have what they call a philosophy of life or a code of ethics, but it is misleading to confuse a practitioner in this general kind of philosophy or ethical code with a true religionist.

For instance, Christianity is characterized by what Abraham Lincoln called "a scheme of salvation" which, incidentally, he said he could never accept. This scheme is based on the idea of death entering the world through the "sin" of Adam and Eve. In order to escape from death, a Christian must accept Jesus Christ as his personal savior and then the Christian is rewarded with life eternal after death. Christianity is not an ethical guide for life. It is a "scheme of salvation from death."

T: *You have your dogma. You are just as dogmatic as anyone can possibly be.*

A: Well, there is a double sense in what you say. Nature is dogmatic. For example: gravity (for earth) is 32' per second/per second, that is the rate at which objects fall to the ground and it does not vary. Indeed Nature is quite dogmatic. Its laws are beyond any argument. Atheists feel that way too: objective reality is objective reality. We don't deal in phantoms. We are back to "What you see is what you get."

The equation for the area of a circle is always going to be πr^2. The time that it takes the earth, currently, to traverse around the sun is 365 days, 5 hours, and 48 minutes. If it ever varies from that, we will be able to measure it.

T: *You criticize religion, but you do exactly the same things. Do you pay taxes?*

A: Oh boy! do we pay taxes! That was the wrong question to ask. The American Atheist Center pays about $12,000 a year *ad valorem*, city, county, and school taxes in Austin, Texas, where it is located.

T: *Do you pay income tax?*

A: Since American Atheists is a non-profit, non-political, educational organization, it does not make a profit and therefore we have not paid income tax. There are a great number of not-for-profit organizations in the United States and none of them pay income tax.

T: *Religious institutions are not for profit! I've got you now!*

A: That is what they allege. Tell me then why they own lumber mills, oil wells, department stores, banks, coal mines, hotels, factories, restaurants —

T: (Interrupting) *Wait a minute! If they use that money to do good, they should be permitted to own those things.*

A: Ah, but that is the problem. The United States government, particularly the I.R.S., has estimated that the churches of the nation spend "only 41 cents a month for everyone who belongs to a church in America" on services to those outside the church, but within the church's own denomination, or sect.

Furthermore, they are in unfair competition with corporations which do pay taxes. The tax exempt status of the churches gives them an advantage so that they can undersell the ordinary business which pays some taxes for the benefits we all receive from government: fire protection, traffic control, police protection, road systems, and so on.

T: *Well, every church has a welfare agency, sometimes a lot of welfare agencies.*

A: And right now, most of the money for operating those welfare agencies comes from the federal government, county, city, and local governments.

There is one particular practice which needs to be pointed out to you. To encourage business and the citizenry to assist with health, education, and welfare, the United States government gives these types of institutions tax exempt status. That's no big deal since they don't make

a profit anyway and they would not need to pay income tax. However, persons who give to these agencies of health, education, and welfare may take a deduction before figuring out their income tax and reporting it on their 1040 form. This encourages giving since the giver gets a reward of less taxation. In the ultimate end then, everyone pays. Those who do not give and do not take a tax exemption must pay higher taxes to make up for those who do give and pay lesser taxes.

In these three categories, then — health, education, and welfare — the Internal Revenue Service requires these types of agencies to report to the I.R.S. with an exact statement of income and output of money. Each year all health, education, and welfare organizations file what is called Form 990 tax reports. They must prove that they use the money for that for which the money is solicited.

The churches and religious institutions all have health, education, and welfare services, but they don't ask for a health, education, or welfare exemption. They always take their exemptions under religion, because in that category the churches and religious institutions need to report to no one. They do not report to government, to the public at large, or even to their own members what their income is or for what they use it. Generally speaking, it is broadly known that the churches and religious institutions use their money to dabble in capitalistic enterprises, in the stock markets, and in some "high on the hog" living. In addition, churches and religious institutions beg money from the governments, at all levels, for adminstrative costs and they try to move into areas where they have no competence. Skilled psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, administrators are often needed and they are not involved where they should be involved. The scandals of millions upon millions of dollars lost in old age home schemes, insurance schemes, bonding schemes, feed-the-hungry schemes, have become a national scandal. Many agencies of government have become involved in an attempt to investigate or to monitor what is happening because the churches and religious organizations are into every conceivable kind of scam operation. The "no need to report" advantage which they enjoy makes this a happy hunting ground for any sharp operator who wants to pose as a church.

T: *You can critize [sic], but show me the welfare agencies that Atheists have.*

A: Ah, Robert G. Ingersoll answered that quite effectively over a hundred years ago. Let me give you his answer: "When Christianity

came into power it destroyed every statue it could lay its ignorant hands upon. It defaced and obliterated every painting; it destroyed every beautiful building; it burned the manuscripts, both Greek and Latin; it destroyed all the history, all the poetry, all the philosophy it could find, and reduced to ashes every library that it could reach with its torch." He went further to ask what Christianity had done in social concern when it was a hundred years old, or two hundred, or three hundred, or a thousand years old. What hospitals had it built, what homes for the aged, what orphanages, and the answer was none. But, if you stop jailing Atheists just for being Atheists, if you stop the economic reprisals and sanctions against us, if we can have even five years with the Christian community off our backs, we can show you what welfare, health, and education programs really should be like. As long as we are arrested and jailed for blasphemy, as long as we are refused the rights of ordinary citizens, we can do little but hope to survive.

T: *That's a cop out. You have not done anything because you are too selfish and individualistic to do anything.*

A: Atheists have been stalwarts in social service agencies for many, many years. What about Florence Nightingale, Jane Addams, James Lick, Stephen Girard, Jean Henri Dunant, Andrew Carnegie, Clarence Darrow —

T: (Interrupting) *Yeah, what did they do?*

A: Why, Florence Nightingale established nursing care for soldiers on the field of battle; Jane Addams — with Hull House — started the entire idea of community centers; James Lick financed the greatest telescope and observatory in the United States; Stephen Girard opened the first *free* college for orphans in our nation [in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania]; Jean Henri Dunant organized the Red Cross; Andrew Carnegie financed most of the libraries in the great cities of the United States; Clarence Darrow fought for workmen's compensation laws and unemployment compensation, as did Eugene V. Debs, who also fought for the unions; James Smithson established the Smithsonian Institute; Frances Wright was the first person to purchase slaves in order to free them and set them up on their own land which she purchased; Madame Marie Curie died from her work with radium to give her findings to the human race —

T: (Interrupting) *You say! But look at the great institutions which the churches have kept going, look at the thousands of religious folk who have been humanitarians.*

A: We feel that people are humanitarians *in spite of their religion*, not because of it. For example, anyone who was a humanitarian when Roman Catholicism dominated Europe was a Roman Catholic or he was a dead man. Even you would not say that from 325 to 1517, when Luther established Protestantism, that all humanitarians were Roman Catholic. They had to be Roman Catholic or die.

If your humanitarian acts are inspired by the motive of getting into heaven, the acts are hardly humanitarian. We are especially proud of our Atheists because the consideration of good of all humankind most often was their inspiration.

Christianity can only be ashamed of its record. History is an indictment against you. You can't brag about your achievements; instead you must cover the stain of blood, torture, death, and misery you have left behind you.

T: *The people who did that were not really Christians.*

A: They were interpreting your Bible just as it was written and following the admonitions of your god and of his alleged son, Jesus Christ. You cannot divest yourself of the guilt of scores of millions of deaths, of 1500 years that the culture of the world has subverted, of your fight against science, education, medicine, and women.

T: *Those were other days and other times. Now we know the true meaning of Christianity.*

A: How dare you try to give a new interpretation, out of two thousand years of human experience, education, and science advancement, to ideas which were bizarre and brutal even when they were written? No "new" interpretation can ever be given of the words of Exodus 22:18, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." The millions of lives which were shattered by that single sentence cannot be restored or repaired or even explained away now with your new sophisticated approach to the scriptures. Humankind was brutalized by religion, and especially by Judeo-Christianity.

All of history and the utterances of persons in history must be read in the context of the time that they occurred. When we read in the Bible, in

Leviticus 21:16-24 that the lord spoke, what was said was what was meant:

> And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
> Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever *he be* of thy seed in their generations that hath *any* blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God.
> For whatsoever man *he be* that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous,
> Or a man that is broken-footed, or broken handed,
> Or crookbacked, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken;
> No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire; he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God.
> He shall eat the bread of his God *both* of the most holy, and of the holy.
> Only he shall not go in unto the veil, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the Lord do sanctify them.
> And Moses told *it* unto Aaron, and to his sons, and unto all the children of Israel.

This means that every United States veteran who has been injured in any of our wars cannot go to church. He isn't wanted there. And all of the black people of our nation, with their flat noses aren't wanted either.

T: *I don't know where you are getting this stuff. It isn't in my Bible —*

A: (Interrupting) You don't read your Bible. It is a book that is put on the shelf in the house and no one looks at it anymore. If they did, the whole thing would be thrown into the garbage can. What you do is to permit your minister to get up in the pulpit on Sunday and take one sentence, out of context, and then preach for an hour on what he thinks that means. He pontificates.

Let me ask you if one time you ever got up in church and questioned the minister like you are questioning us now?

T: *Well, that's the house of the Lord.*

A: (Interrupting) And you don't have freedom of speech there, or freedom of thought, or any other kind of freedom?

T: *It is my church and as long as I approve of what goes on in there, that is my business and my business alone.*

A: It ceases to be your business when you ask us to pay higher taxes to support your church. In every state in the union, the churches own about 25 percent of all privately owned land. Because they take that much land out of the tax base, our taxes are higher. The churches do not pay sales tax, so our sales tax is higher.

T: *You are going over the same ground again.*

A: If you want to ride a bicycle, don't ask me to buy one for you. If you want to go into sado-masochism, don't ask me to buy the leather belts. Do what you want to do, but *pay for it*. If you want to believe in a completely insane "scheme of salvation," don't let that slop over into the secular part of our nation.

T: *What do you mean slop over?*

A: Why do we have difficult divorce laws? Why, in New York City, the most sophisticated town in the United States, do we still have to stage phony "adultery" scenes to get a divorce? Who is pushing against sex education, distribution of birth control information and devices? Who is fighting against the E.R.A.? Who is asking for censorship? Who is book burning and record burning? What is your Family Protection Act but a law against women? Why is Planned Parenthood being persecuted and fighting for the life of its organization? Who is doing this? Is it science? Is it education? Is it the Atheists? Who but religion is the big obstacle?

How many years were we all required to eat fish on Friday in our schools, in hospitals, in the armed services? For how many years were we deprived of birth control information? For how long were cinema and stage plays in the United States the victims of religious censoring?

T: *That's the American way.*

A: It is like hell. That is the way of religious fascism. If you want to be insane, perhaps you have a right to be insane, but your insanity must be confined to your home and to your church. You can not intrude it into the public arena, by force of law, and command us all to participate in it. It is time that we Atheists start to say "No." This is what we call "The Atheist's right to NO," and every citizen in the United States has that right.

T: *What does Atheism have to offer me?*

A: If you are religious, we are not trying to offer you anything. The only thing that we can do is to try to point out to you that there is a method by which everyone can obtain the ability to view objectively, without prejudice, the important matters of society, thus eliminating religiously biased misconceptions concerning the life and aspirations of the human community. This will lead to the future development of a culture based on reason. *That* is the only thing for which we are fighting. That method, of which we speak, is the so-called "scientific method" of dealing constantly with objective reality. What you see is what you get. There is no super-added value system or super-world peopled with spirits, souls, or an answering god. There is no *deus ex machina* [in Greek drama, a god who resolves the entanglements of the play by his supernatural intervention] who is going to swoop down out of the clouds and deliver you from your human problems.

When you ask us what we have to offer you, the answer is *you*. We can give you yourself as a whole man, standing on your own feet, doing your own thing, solving your own problems, having *amour propre* [self esteem; self respect] and being proud of your own abilities. *You* are the answer.

T: *Religion is the answer.*

A: Religion is the problem, not the answer. The only thing that religion can possibly do, on earth, is to have its usual narcotic effect on human mentality. Those who are unable to cope with certain psychological stresses tend to resort to various tranquilizing outlets. Religion is one such outlet, if you want to call it that.

T: *None of this relates to me. I don't believe in organized religion.*

A: Whether religion is organized or disorganized makes little or no difference. The problems are inherent in the basic ideas of religion, not in the organization or lack thereof.

T: *You won't accept anything that a religious person says. What about reincarnation?*

A: Reincarnation is one of the most amusing of all religious ideas. Imagine a soul traveling, after the death of the original host body, into

another host body which has just been conceived! How could the soul in a human body divine where an act of conception was occurring? This is indeed ludicrous!

Also, the originators of this idea forgot a small mathematical problem. If there were originally two souls, that of Adam and Eve and those souls had to wait until the host bodies died to move on to the next host bodies, from whence was derived souls for Cain and Abel and Seth, the sons of Adam and Eve? Consider the United States. It had a population of 120 million in 1936. Now, it has a population nearing 220 million. Assuming that all of those first 120 million souls passed from one body to another, they could only occupy 120 million other bodies. Is someone in the business of manufacturing souls? From whence did the extra 100 million souls come? It is the same with the world population as we near the six billion mark now when the world allegedly began with only two souls. Religious theorists were absurd to begin, but now there is no valid reason for the human community to cling to these ideas brought to birth when we were mental savages.

T: *Well, we Christians don't really believe in reincarnation anyway. I only thought I would ask you "know it alls" what you thought.*

You Atheists think that you have all knowledge. You know all the answers. You don't. You don't know all physics and astronomy and all history. No one knows all that. Since there is a vast area in which knowledge is not available you can't rule out God.

A: As Atheists we do not need to claim all knowledge and we don't. We seek to know the world around us, what the order of nature is and to test that order to see if it is always the same so that we may know how to deal with it.

We try to understand generic ideas. We don't need to see every apple tree in the world to know what an apple tree is. An orderly study of the generic idea of god makes it clear to us what you religious people think of your god. The application of reason to those precepts can only make them tumble, for they are absurd.

Let us take one example. You posit a god who is omniscient, omnibenevolent, and omnipotent. That is, your god is all knowing, all good, and all powerful. If "he" is all good how can evil exist? Yet, when you manufactured your god you manufactured an alternate all knowing, all evil, and all powerful Satan or devil who counterfoils everything that the all knowing, all good, all powerful god is supposed to control. So that, first, your theologians have had the enormous problem of evil in

this world with which they have had to cope. Hundreds of thousands of Christian writers have struggled with the idea. But, second, apparently your theologians actually created the idea of evil, with which they have had to contend, by the inventions of the stories of Satan, the devil, Lucifer, or whatever one desires to call him, her, or it.

There should be some consistency, some coherence to some of these ideas. There should be some logic to them, some reason. But there is none, no, none at all.

T: *Like it or not, this is a Christian nation.*

A: The United States, since before it was a nation, has not been demographically very religious. The first census taken by the new government in 1790 showed that only 3 percent of the population were church attenders.

T: *That can't be true. Everyone knows that our nation was founded by people who fled from Europe in order to find religious freedom in America.*

A: Unfortunately for you, the Christian historians have made a case for Christianity where there was no case. Social and economic factors were as pressing to colonists in the United States as was religion. And, when the religious people did get here and did get into positions of control, the religious strictures placed on the colonials were greater than what they suffered in Europe.

T: *That can't be!*

A: Wasn't Roger Williams run out of Massachusetts for his religious ideas and didn't he flee to Rhode Island to start his own religion there?

T: *Well, that was just one man.*

A: No, his followers were with him, as were those of Anne Hutchinson when she had to flee.

T: *They were isolated instances.*

A: Oh, we suppose that the witches were isolated instances, too. They still died, didn't they? And, what about the actual religious battles

in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Virginia, New York, Kentucky, West Virginia, Missouri, Ohio, New Hampshire, Maine, Texas, Rhode Island —

T: (Interrupting) *Why, you are naming half the states!*

A: Yes, because of the battles, riots, even outright small wars — especially in Maryland — which occurred and all of these over religion. Our land has been disquieted with it all.

T: *Why isn't this in our school books?*

A: For the same reason that you read nothing in the school books about the blacks, or the Indians, or women in the United States. Much has been suppressed.

T: *I don't believe you. Atheists are liars anyway. If you had this information, you would be getting it out.*

A: We try. The American Atheist Center in Austin, Texas, houses The Charles E. Stevens American Atheist Library and Archives, Inc. We have the largest collection of books, booklets, magazines, pamphlets, brochures, throw-aways, journals, broadsides, and leaflets in the world. We collect everything we can find. All of this can be authenticated from news articles of the times involved, from books which were written by religious people, from historians of the eras. Everything is there, but the story — by and large — like the stories concerned with the blacks, the Indians, and women have been suppressed.

We report on this in the *American Atheist* magazine and in our radio and television reports. Our speakers bring this out in college and university speeches. We try to inform the American people in these radio and television interviews that we have, but it is a long hard job which we undertake.

T: *What's your excuse for not having done this already?*

A: Well, we are not the Roman Catholic Church. We can't sell you heaven and swim in money from the sale.

T: *You Atheists don't really do anything worthwhile. You are worried about prayers and those things which are personal to us religious folk,*

but why don't you use your power to TAX THE CHURCH?

A: Actually, it is not our position that anyone should try to TAX THE CHURCH.

T: *Well, I'm religious and I think that churches should be taxed. Almost everyone does.*

A: We don't. That's not the issue.

T: *Oh, we hear you all the time saying the churches should be taxed. What kind of a game are you playing?*

A: Stop long enough to hear us out. Tax runs with the land, doesn't it?

T: *Yes, we all pay taxes on our land.*

A: Sales taxes are levied on everything you purchase, aren't they?

T: *Of course they are. We pay 5⅛ percent in this state.*

A: When your parents died and left you some little inheritance, you paid a tax on that, didn't you?

T: *Yes, that happened.*

A: And, if you own a few shares of A.T.&T. or other stock, you pay taxes on the dividends you earn, don't you?

T: *Will you get to the point?*

A: If taxes run with the land, with purchases, with inheritances, with stock and bond investment, any one — or any institution — that holds land, makes purchases, takes inheritances, or plays the stock market should do that at the peril of taxes attached, shouldn't they?

T: *I think if I have to pay, everyone should. Naturally, I think that.*

A: But, the federal government, every state, county, city, and borough in the United States has passed laws exempting the churches and religious institutions from paying of those taxes.

T: *Like I say, TAX THE CHURCHES.*

A: No. Now, hear us out. The tax is *on the land, on the sales, on the inheritances, on the earnings from the stocks and bonds,* not on any churches. Atheists don't want to TAX THE CHURCH, they simply want the federal government, states, counties, cities, and boroughs to *stop excusing* the churches and religious institutions *from paying* this tax burden that everyone else has to pay when the churches do exactly what you are doing: purchasing land, making sales transactions, holding stocks and bonds, or taking inheritances.

T: *That's what I said, TAX THE CHURCHES.*

A: No, the tax is *on the land*, not on the churches. *Ad valorem tax* is a non-discriminatory fee, or tax, placed alike on all who desire to hold land. It is not aimed at either the promotion or the restriction of religious belief. *If* the churches and religious institutions want to grab up land they should be put on notice that *taxes run with that land*, that they will *not* be excused from this tax. They are obligated to pay whatever the rate of taxes are on the land. Do you know, that of the privately owned land in the nation, about 25 percent is owned by the church?

T: *It's that much! You see that! I knew it! And it isn't my church that owns all that!*

A: Atheists advocate that the churches and religious institutions should pay the ordinary taxes on the ordinary business activities in which they are engaged: buying land, having sales transactions, obtaining inheritances, playing the stock market. This is not a TAX THE CHURCH idea, it is an idea of fair play and equality of treatment. If an ordinary citizen, such as yourself, must pay taxes in his ordinary business activities, the church should do it too. When you say TAX THE CHURCH that sounds like you want to put a burden of taxation on churches in their religious activities. We Atheists don't want to tax anyone to pray. There is freedom of speech in our land; and prayer in church is freedom of speech. However, if the church is gobbling up 25 percent of all privately owned land it should pay the same rate of taxes *on that land* that you pay. Do you see the difference?

T: *I never thought of it that way.*

A: The founding fathers of our nation thought of it that way, because they set up the First Amendment to the Constitution in such a way that special laws could not be made to "establish" the churches in the United States. A church, or a religion, is always "established" when it either (1) receives from government some tax funds or (2) is given such a position of privilege that it comes first before the rest of the nation. All of the laws exempting the churches from taxation are special laws that have been passed to give them a better situation than you have. We Atheists feel that if you want to support your churches or your religious institutions, that you can do that, but to require all of us to pay more taxes so that the churches can take an absolutely free ride is too much.

T: *But on the other hand, the First Amendment that you talk about all the time says we have the right to the "free exercise" of religion. If the churches paid taxes this would hamper the free exercise of religion. I have to think about my own church. Now, I'm for TAXING THE BIG CHURCHES myself, but fair is fair.*

A: But, the First Amendment also guarantees freedom of speech and that doesn't relieve owners of printing houses from paying taxes on the print shops and land they own.

The so-called "free exercise" clause of the First Amendment protects your right to prayer, mass, sermons, sacraments, and all the practices of your religious beliefs. It doesn't say a thing about your churches purchasing 25 percent of all the land available to purchase.

All that the Atheists are saying is: if you want to be religious, that's your business. Of course, we think it's a little nutty, but that is still your business. If you want churches, build them and support them. If you want administrative organizations for your churches, build them and support them. If you want schools, hospitals, religious institutions of any kind, build them and support them. The Atheists have a right to balk when you demand that all of these institutions are completely tax free and when they are given the largess of government in every conceivable way, at taxpayer expense.

We agree with Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) who made a beautiful comment about those who "professed" religion. In his *Works*, Vol. XVII (page 506) he says:

> When a religion is good, I conceive it will support itself; and when it does not support itself, and God does not take care to support it so that its professors are obliged to call for help of the civil power, tis a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one.

T: *As long as the tax exemption puts all churches on an equal footing, what's wrong with that? Then my little church would be protected.*

A: But what is tax exemption? It really is a subsidy from the state, that is — from all taxpayers, and it is in direct proportion to the amount of taxable property that each religious denomination owns.

The exemptions are NOT equally applicable to all religions. Look at Utah! That state is owned by the Mormon Church. The exemptions fall with considerable largess on the largest landholders. The richer denominations have a clear advantage over the poor ones.

T: *That's my complaint. The little churches could use some help, I think. But, boy! those big churches don't need anything.*

A: That is our point. A little church owning one little lot does not take out of the tax base as much as, oh, say, the Roman Catholic Church does, since the Roman Catholic Church often owns about 50 percent of all the church owned land in a given city. That makes the people who attend the little church pay higher taxes on their homes and the land on which their homes sit . . . and then they have no money left to put in the collection basket for their little church. If every group simply supported its own church only, and each church paid the ordinary taxes which run with whatever business the church is undertaking, everyone would be better off. It would be much more equitable.

As it is now, members of the poorer congregations are put in the position of contributing to the support of the richer denominations by an increased rate of taxation on their individual property. This is very inequitable. Atheists particularly see this as onerous to them since they are required to support *all* religions. We think that President Thomas Jefferson was correct when he said:

> It is wicked and tyrannical to compel any man to support a religion in which he does not believe.

[in his Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, introduced into the Assembly of Virginia in 1779 and passed in 1786]

T: *But you aren't giving the churches a break in another area. They have functions which would cost the state a fortune to take over. Look at the good they do.*

A: The churches do well; they don't do good! As we pointed out before, if they have a Health, Education, or Welfare service, they can be

tax exempt on those eleemosynary [charitable] or philanthropic services. But, since they lie and cheat they take their tax exemption under the "Religion category" so no one can check on them. Anyway, the government has statistics of how much "good" the churches do. It is reported that they spend about 41 cents a month for everyone who belongs to a church in the United States on "services to those outside the church." But, usually that means services to those who profess to a belief in the creeds of the churches' own denominations. The Roman Catholic Church, for instance, doesn't do marriage counseling or teaching about the rhythm method of birth control to Jews or Muslims.

T: *Yes, but they do have social service organizations.*

A: Who funds those social service organizations? Do you know that the government does most of it? The churches really just administrate, not telling anyone where they get the money for that administration — which is from the taxpayer.

T: *That's not true. I know that my church has a home for delinquent girls.*

A: And, if any of those girls are receiving Social Security benefits or Veterans' Administration benefits, the churches get the money from those agencies. Often welfare pays for the support of the girl, or state agencies.

Stop to think a moment as to what the great social service agencies are. All major community services have been handled by city, county, state, and federal agencies for scores of years. Where do you go for welfare, for food stamps?

From what agencies do you get Social Security for either disability or for retirement? Doesn't your state government furnish hospitals for the mentally ill and mentally deficient, schools for the blind and deaf, child care centers and foster homes, institutions for delinquents, alcoholics, narcotics users, and the aged? Who hands out unemployment compensation, workmen's compensation? From whence do special benefits come for veterans, the grants to get veterans through college, and what about V.A. loans to buy a home or government loans for small businesses? Private industry now hires the handicapped and trains them. All the programs for research for heart diseases, cancer, arthritis, are the concerns of private agencies, which are secular — not religious. The Red Cross and the National Guard are called out for disasters. There is

a whole myriad of public and private agencies funded through the Community Chests of almost every city.

What the churches do is a very small outreach percentage-wise and it is always along sectarian lines. And, isn't it funny, even to you, that they will give no accounting at all of what they actually do, how they spend money?

T: *The churches are still good institutions. They just deserve to receive support.*

A: But how can you say that when they are in such conflict between themselves? You, yourself, don't like the "big churches." The beliefs and practices of one church are often repugnant to other churches. There is a religious diversity of opinion now which almost splits our nation in respect to sex education, birth control, abortion, liberalizing divorce laws, tax support of parochial schools, religious "white-flight schools" accommodating racial bigotry. Our women are fighting over the E.R.A. and it is the religious which are in opposition to this amendment to the constitution.

T: *I think that if the churches pay taxes, like my small church, it should be minimal.*

A: But don't you realize the many services given to the churches by local government alone? There is fire protection, mail service, police protection, traffic control, street lighting, connecting with water and sewage outlets, garbage collection, access to our court systems, assistance in times of natural catastrophies, protection in time of war. Last year when the city of New York asked the churches to pay for garbage collection alone, the churches refused to do it. They pay for none of these services at all.

T: *I didn't realize that.*

A: That's because no one points out any of this except we Atheists.

T: *But, churches raise property values, they bring people to a community and increase the local tax base and that results in lower taxes.*

A: The churches have been claiming that, so an attorney in Washington, D.C., made a very careful study of the matter and he found out that

there is much litigation over zoning with property owners asking for churches to be excluded from their neighborhoods because the church buildings are undesirable incursions into the neighborhoods because of noise, mere inconvenience, depressiveness, violations of police, fire, health, and sanitary regulations, disturbances of the peace, bell ringing, increased traffic, parking congestion problems, and because they are a nuisance. The law book resulting from the study of attorney James Curry is titled: *Public Regulation of The Religious Use of Land.*

T: *On the other hand, the government carries on programs that some churches and their members don't like. You named zoning regulations here, but I don't want evolution in the public schools and I don't want the schools to teach my children sex education.*

A: The situation of all taxpayers is that some government services and activities which are supported by their tax funds go to the general welfare and not back to the specific taxpayer. What about the man who does not own a car and yet pays higher taxes in order to have streets and roads in his city?

T: *But sex education is different.*

A: No, it is not. It is an issue of general welfare and not an issue of religion. The churches have always pretended that sex is a sin and naturally, to keep it sinful, it is necessary to keep it mysterious. Most of the morality of the church is deeply bound up with the desire of the church to control everyone's sex life.

T: *But that is the point. Our morals come from religion. There would be no morality if there was no religion. And, each church simply wants to claim that it is right. That's a healthy argument between them; it's a good rivalry. This is the system of "plurality" in the United States in our churches.*

A: We'll answer your last remark first for surely you are not going to fall for that old ploy. There is no "plurality" of religion in the United States. There are just different brands of Judeo-Christianity. Because this one sect, Judeo-Christianity, fragments off into a very great number of splinter groups does not mean that there is a "plurality" of religion. The great sects are still the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Judeo-Christian which really includes the Muslim with it, the Shinto, the

Taoist, the Zoroastrian, and the Confucian. We are a "one sect" nation.

Secondly, religion has no monopoly on either ethics or morality. Other institutions in our culture foster these values, as much or more than do the churches. The single largest public institutional system which is involved in this is our public schools.

If you are going to use "morals" for tax exemption — then you would exempt good families from taxation, those families which instill ethics and ideas of decent living in their children. If you are going to give tax exemption for teaching kindness or love, or aiding the human community, most of our scientists, inventors, and educators would be tax free. Doctors especially would never pay taxes, or dentists. We can't, as a nation, tax private citizens in relation to their virtuous characteristics, or the lack thereof, and neither should we give tax relief to a religious institution on these grounds.

Come on! What is the greatest institution in America for the building of ethics and a decent life?

T: *The church.*

A: No, the home is — your homes and our homes. You try to teach your children to be kind and love-filled, decent, honest, understanding, and so do we. If any institution should be tax exempt for the rearing of children and inculcating in them all the ethical precepts of our nation and our times, it is the family.

T: *Well, it sounds good, but since you are Atheists, I rather figure that something is fishy here. You are NEVER going to give a break even to a little church.*

A: How about giving a break to our children? The schools of this city, of this county, are supported by *ad valorem* taxes and it is just that tax that the churches evade. That means that the churches, like other businesses, do not help to support our schools.

T: *What you want to do is to bankrupt the church.*

A: If the churches were honest they would come forward to put their actual financial conditions on public record. An objective appraisal could then be made.

Does anyone know how much the church has invested in the stock

market here in the United States? One Wall Street investment company tried to count up what churches had in portfolios just in this *one* company. It added up to $3 billion and then gave up. It gave up because the churches hide the names of their portfolios. Would you believe that Science, Inc., playing the stock market, is really Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Science Church? Bishop & Co. and Trubell Co. are the holding names for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Vermont. When you see some company listed as Annunciata, or Angela, or August, you know you are looking at a Roman Catholic Church holding. Many of the banks have religious accounts, or portfolios, under the names of "List #2" and how can we find out what is going on then? Remember that the income of the churches in 1981 was 50 billion dollars.

Now, let me ask you a question. Could we use that money more beneficially for some *real* good? Could we rid the Great Lakes of their pollution with $50 billion? Could we tear down the slums of New York and replace them for $50 billion? Could we *give* a college education to every bright kid in the nation with $50 billion?

Remember that we are talking about $50 billion *each year*, every year.

T: *It can't be that much. It isn't that much.*

A: Don't be naive. Do you know, for example, that all the utility companies give a lower rate to churches for energy use? Do you know that every corporation in the United States can, and often does, give to the churches since the corporations can take 5 percent off the top of their gross income and give it to religious organizations and *then* figure their taxes? It is a special provision put into the I.R.S. laws for the benefit of the church. The figure of $50 billion is probably low if all of the tax benefits and special privileges are figured accurately. Everyone who studies this problem is hampered by the magnitude of it. The only institution which could really find out what is going on is the federal government and it would tax the government itself to find out all the holdings, the loopholes, the hidden wealth of religious institutions.

T: *Where do you get these statistics? How do you know this?*

A: We get the financial statistics primarily from the I.R.S., from carefully watching what the financial world reports, particularly the *Wall Street Journal* which has given a great deal of information. The Episcopalian journal *The Churchman* has made some disclosures. The *Chris-*

tian Science Monitor has been especially good. *U.S. News and World Report* often comes up with excellent reports and *Awake* and *Watchtower* put out by the Jehovah's Witnesses are often a revelation. A careful watch on the *New York Times*, or *Washington Post*, or other major newspapers fits in a considerable part of the picture. All of the wire services carry financial scandals from time to time, for they often really cannot be suppressed. There are, also, books being written on this constantly. Several of the best books have been written by reporters who have tried to dig up information. About five years back a group of Roman Catholic lay people got together and tried to force their church to give out information on its wealth. When the Roman Catholic Church would not do this, these people did it, but in a fragmental way, reporting diocese by diocese. Quite frequently a disgruntled communicant will give out information. It was a break in the ranks which brought out financial disclosures about the Salvation Army, about Herbert Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God, about the Mormons. There is a great deal of information available. If one is watchful, the disclosures are there, in part. We know it is only the tip of the iceberg but at least we have that tip.

Now, there is an information depository. The American Atheist Center urges all its members to send in any information that they have. The Center now has 34 chapters in 27 states and this is an efficient and effective research network. At The American Atheist Center we made dossiers on each religious sect and on the leaders of these sects. At all times we know what is going on, where it is going on, and why. The information is used exclusively for educational purposes. We write books, booklets, pamphlets with the disclosures. We put the information in our monthly journal, *The American Atheist* magazine and we have an "American Atheist [Television] Forum" which is a weekly analysis of religious shenanigans. The television forum is on cable in a number of cities across the United States, in San Francisco, New York, Seattle, Charlotte (North Carolina), Austin (Texas), New Jersey, Lexington (Kentucky), Boston (Massachusetts), and Arlington (Virginia).

The constitution of the United States must live up to its guarantee to protect the freedom of conscience of all people in our nation — including American Atheists.

T: *Well, the Constitution is to protect the religious people in our nation, too.*

A: Ah, but you see, the term "religious people" is not synonymous

with the term "church-goer" in our nation. The state must also protect those who do *not* attend churches *out of their own choice*. Going to or staying away from church, or having or not having membership in a church, is a matter of private decision. The state cannot burden the religious person, who is not a church-goer, with taxes in order to give relief to persons who desire to be "churched." (That's a religious term.) Non-church-goers, if they wanted to support the churches, could send money, or go to church now and then just to do that. As the situation is now there is discrimination against the non-church-goer. Government compulsion is used to extract higher property taxes from them so that the churches can be tax free. This is an indirect means of obtaining money from the general taxpayer which he would not, of his own volition, give to the church.

T: *But everyone goes to church.*

A: Aha! That's what the churches would like for you to think. But in the entire history of the United States, the churches have never been able to coax even a majority of the people into church.

T: *That's NOT true! EVERYBODY goes to church.*

A: Would you believe the Bureau of the Census? Especially when it accepts the estimates of the churches as to membership?

T: *It does?*

A: Yes, since 1946 it does. Prior to that time, the U.S. Bureau of the Census required the churches to make accurate reports but since that time the Bureau of the Census has relied on the churches to make voluntary reports.

T: *Well, how many people go to church then?*

A: The largest percentage that ever went to church went during the McCarthy hysteria in our country in the early 1950s and that was about 47 percent. But, the Census Bureau, in a big study which it did over the period from 1906 to 1946 said that the churches "puff" their figures about 15 percent. For instance, using actuary methods, the Presbyterian Church still counts Madalyn O'Hair as a member, although she has been out of that church for 50 years. Trouble develops when there are

marriages. If a Baptist marries a Methodist and starts to go to her church, he is still counted by the Baptists, but now he is counted by the Methodists, too.

We were not a "churchy" nation ever. In 1780 only 4 percent of the population went to church. By 1850 it was up to 16 percent largely from immigrants flooding in, and before the Civil War it finally got up to 23 percent — in 1860. But the Civil War shattered the faith of a lot of people and in 1870 church attendance was down to 18 percent. By 1880 it was only 20 percent and in 1890 it was 22 percent. Don't let the church folk fool you into thinking that they have a tight grip on the nation. They don't.

T: *That was then. This is now. Now, everyone goes to church. Look at the cars parked outside of church buildings.*

A: Pick up your telephone book and look in the yellow pages under churches and count how many there are. Then multiply that by about 200 which is the size of a fairly big church, since many churches don't even have pews enough to accommodate that many. Then multiply the two. For instance, in Austin, Texas, where The American Atheist Center is headquartered, there are 390 churches listed in the telephone book. If we multiply that by 200, we come up with seats enough in churches to accommodate 78,000 persons . . . but the population of Austin, Texas, is now, as of October, 1985, 436,188. That is, the churches can accommodate 18 percent of the population. We Atheists have more than that! So the churches, even here in the Bible belt, are not doing so well.

Some religious statisticians insist that all churches can seat 300 people. Go to church next Sunday and take a look. See if that's true. But, continuing with the example of Austin, Texas, even if we gave the churches 300 persons in attendance each and every week in each and every church, that total would still only be 102,000 persons in church in a city of over 436,000, which is 23 percent at most. Do you want to argue with us about half of them being under 18? If you want to argue, it just so happens that we have the official church statistics always at hand and the churches themselves report that "over half" are in that category.

T: *Let's get off this subject. You Atheists have slick tongues and you're always dragging in other issues or trying to make us look selfish or guilty, or you're trying to show that we aren't what we claim to be.*

You are agents of Satan and you speak with forked tongues.
I have another idea I just thought about. You were talking about Thor and Zeus, and that Egyptian god —

A: That Egyptian god's name was Ra.

T: *Yeah, that's what I said. All these heathen gods were representations of the one god that is the true god, Jesus Christ.*

A: Unfortunately, again, that isn't right. Every nation which had a supreme god, in a pool of minor gods, invented those gods for their nations and for their times. For instance, if the people were yellow skinned and slanted eyes with black hair, their gods had yellow skin, slanted eyes and black hair. If the people were blue eyed blonds, their gods were blue eyed blonds. If the people were tall, their gods were tall. If the people were short, their gods were short. Jesus Christ was a Jew and a Semite and he looked just like the Semitic people. Before there were carpenters, the gods were fishermen, or herders of sheep, or great hunters. The people were not looking for a universal god — we can look back with our sophisticated knowledge now and try to say that — but at the time, they simply wanted a super-being with whom they could identify. They were probably looking for a father-figure, someone from their memories as children, who took care of them when they were small and was then asked to take care of them when they were adults. It's a form of wish fulfillment.

T: *It takes a lot of audacity for you to simply reject out of hand what good and wise men have accepted for a helluva long time.*

A: But what makes you think we do this out of audacity? The Atheist is a scholar. We are not flip in this at all. Our opinions are considered. Remember that there have been Atheist scholars as long as there has been religion. We have labored over Old and New Testament criticism, the problem of the historicity of Jesus Christ, comparable religion, philosophy of religion. Remember, please, that good and wise men — even the founding fathers of this nation — accepted slavery, child labor, the inferior position for women. We need a constant review of the assumptions underlying all our institutions as human culture matures. As the human community becomes more knowledgeable it must dump old ideas which are harmful to it. Religion happens to be one of those old ideas which needs to be dumped.

T: *There has always been religion. Why hasn't it died out? I'll tell you why — because it is true, that's why.*

A: Religion has not died out because the religious people make certain that they seize the rising generation.

T: *What do you mean by that? We aren't "seizing" anyone. This is what I dislike about you Atheists so much. You are so all-fired smart. You have an answer to everything and none of your answers make sense. Nobody is "seizing" nobody [sic].*

A: Hold on. Let us explain. We listen to religious leaders and we read religious history. The Jesuits, of the Roman Catholic Church, are considered to be the best religious educators in the world. And, the Jesuits have a slogan which says the whole thing: "Give me a child until he is six — and the church has him." By and large that's a true statement. For instance, what brand of Christianity are you?

T: *I don't have a "brand" of Christianity. I'm a Baptist and our teachers are a lot better than the Jesuits.*

A: Hold on, we are only using the Jesuits as an example. You Baptists could well say, "Give me a child until he is six — and the church has him." What I want to ask you, please, is what religion were your parents?

T: *They were Baptists. We've been Baptists all along. None of us are ever going to turn "mic"; [sic] we aren't fish-eaters! Everyone knows the history of* ***that*** *church —*

A: (Interrupting) Please let us go on here.

T: (Interrupting) . . . *and you damn well better believe none of us will ever be an Atheist.*

A: Well, we are glad about *that* too. But we need to go on with this other train of thought. You are Baptist then because your mother and father were Baptist and they reared you as a Baptist?

T: *I would have been a Baptist anyway.*

A: Now, don't personalize everything. We can talk in a general way, here. Most persons who are Baptists are Baptists because their parents were Baptists and they were reared in that faith. Most persons who are Roman Catholic are Roman Catholics because their parents were Roman Catholics and they were reared in that faith. The same thing pertains to Methodists, and Presbyterians, and Lutherans, and Mormons, by and large. Not always, but most of the time this is true. Wouldn't you say that?

T: *I guess that's right. The Bible does say "Honor thy mother and thy father."*

A: So what the Jesuits say is right. A kid is a little like a computer card. If you punch holes in the computer card, those holes are there. If you roll the card up, if you dog-ear it, even if you punch more holes in it, there is very little you can do about those original holes. Religion is like that. Something is emotionally impressed upon the mind of a child when he is very young and it is there.

T: *Children need religion. I don't see nothing wrong with that.*

A: We do.

T: *You would.*

A: Let us give you an example that you will see right away. The very first prayer you ever learned, you did not know what you were saying. You learned the prayer because your mother patted you on the poo-poo, she hugged you and she kissed you. You felt loved and wanted and appreciated because you had learned that little rhyme. This is emotional indoctrination or emotional programming.

T: *My mother did NOT program me.*

A: Please hold on a moment. When you had to learn the multiplication table at school, the teacher didn't hug you and kiss you and pat your poo-poo. Neither did your mother; you were probably boxed on the ears and told, "O.K. lunkhead, *learn* it." There was a different kind of evaluation placed on the learning process. One was emotionally reinforced with a reward of love. The other was an intellectual exercise which had an entirely different approach. You were well aware that no

one was going to love you for learning the math tables.

We can go even further than that. Suppose you were just a few days old. As a baby, that young, you could feel and see and hear and you have some understanding. Suddenly, you were taken out of your home into the streets where you heard other noises and saw other sights. You were transported to a building filled with organ music and a quiet hush. You heard unison prayers and could see the lights through the stained glass windows. And your mother smelled different, not like cooking, but of perfume. She wasn't in the usual housedress that you snuggled up against. She had on a dress which had a different feeling to you, smoother and nicer probably. You heard a strange sonorous voice preaching from somewhere up above you and you did not even know that the voice issued from a pulpit.

This was repeated periodically. You could tell the rhythm of it; it went on once a week. You learned that your parents revered this kind of activity. It was important to them. They dressed up to go to church. They gave to that church what you quickly learned was very important to them: money. By the time you were three years old you had had your internal computer card punched scores of times with the idea of religion, and home, and family, and love — and — at that age you had no idea what was going on. By the time you were six years old, you were locked into the Baptist faith till you could hardly have gotten out of it if you tried. You did not know anything else.

This is what the Jesuits mean by "Give me a child until he is six." You probably never even dreamed there was another brand of religion other than the Baptist faith you knew until you got into school and met other kids from other homes with different religions.

Even then, you could not tell the difference. Come on, right now, quickly, what is the difference between a Baptist and a Methodist?

T: *Well, they're Christian too!*

A: Yes, but why aren't you a Methodist then?

T: *At least we aren't Catholic!*

A: What's wrong with the Roman Catholics?

T: *They're ruled by a Pope! They aren't even getting their orders from America.*

A: So what? How else are they different?

T: *Well, they are different.*

A: But you don't know how?

T: *I don't need to know how. I know they are different.*

A: Actually you can't really tell me the difference between a Lutheran, a Baptist, an Episcopalian, a Presbyterian, a Mormon —

T: (Interrupting) *I don't need to know that. All I need to know is what I am and that I am saved by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.*

A: We just wanted to make the point that you are what you are taught to be.

T: *Look whose [sic] talking! You rear your kids as Atheists, don't you?*

Mrs. O'Hair: Let me answer that one personally, because I think it is important that I do. I represent Atheists in almost everyone's mind in the United States today and I can tell you what happened with me and with scores of Atheist mothers just like me.

I did not know what to do about religion and my children. I was caught up in the idea of "being fair." So, I sent my oldest son to church and to Sunday school in the interests of fairness. He was reinforced in the idea of religion by his grandparents, in our home, who were religious. I thought that I should not teach him anything about Atheism. He knew I was an Atheist and by my actions, he could see how I lived and what I felt and thought.

Now, I am convinced that I made a mistake.

With my second son, I just did not teach him anything. I did not expose him to religion at all. I never took him to church. I never sent him to Sunday school.

Oops, now wait a minute. In school one year, I think he was in second or third grade, the teacher, every Monday, asked who all went to Sunday school the day before. Jon (my number two son) wanted to know what Sunday school was. So, I decided to take him to the biggest, grandest, most elaborate church in the city and, of course, that was Roman Catholic. I didn't know if the church had a Sunday school or not

(I was naive about religion then), so we just went to the regular services. Everyone kept getting down on their knees and getting up and I did not know what they were doing so we just sat there; we did not get up and down. Anyway, Atheists do not get on their knees for anyone. People were fingering beads next to us and we could hear them muttering under their breath. Jon watched everything intently, his big eyes very busy. When we got out of the church, the following conversation ensued:

"Well, what did you think of that?"

"Was that guy the Lone Ranger?"

"The one in the cloak?"

"Yes, the red cloak."

"No, he is called a priest. The Lone Ranger doesn't wear a cloak like that."

"Yes, he does." A short pause followed and then the remark, "But, it's black." A long moment of silence followed. "I'm glad he wasn't the Lone Ranger."

"Why?"

"Because I like the Lone Ranger."

"You didn't like this man?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Why, didn't you see him? He just ignored everyone who was there. He just kept talking to that little fancy bowl and he turned his back on all the people and just went about doing what he wanted to do." Another long pause and then, "He didn't care about anyone there. He turned his back on them."

I was stunned with the insight of the child. He never asked to go back to church again. He never evidenced any interest in the Bible, or in any religious ideas at all. I think he is totally free of religion.

Later, I had an argument with a woman from Michigan, an Atheist. I was saying in a meeting that I thought I should have taught this son, Jon, something about religion, as my oldest son, Bill, had an opportunity to be taught. I should not have used the word opportunity, since it is not that, it is instead unfortunate to be exposed to religion.

I'll never forget that woman. She was afraid of me, because — after all — I'm the national leader of American Atheists. She was little, physically, too. I towered over her. I remember her name; it was Barbara Schwartz; I remember it although this incident was years ago. She got up and gave me "what for" and I am certain that it took considerable personal courage for her to do it.

Her central point was this: if your father was a male chauvinist and you grew up accepting the brutalization of women and then after many years of struggling to reach your freedom, you became a mother — would you deliberately teach your children male chauvinism? If you grew up in a situation where you were taught racism and in your mature adult life you saw that racism was bad for the human community, would you teach your child to be a racist? The question was compelling because she was a Gentile married to a Jew. I was certain she spoke out of personal experience. Then she asked the question that I could not answer. She said, if you grew up in a religious home and you struggled for years to free yourself of religion, why should you impose it on your children and constrict them psychologically, or cause them emotional distress, by burdening them with an irrational thought system?

She was right. I had freed myself of religion and was putting my own children back into the bondage. So, with my third child, a girl named Robin, I deliberately reared her as an Atheist, emphasizing Atheist values.

Even so, I could not do this with her when she was tiny. Rather, I simply permitted her to have an environment, my home, where she was *free from religion*. I thought that when she reached the age of intellectual discretion, she could explore religions or religious ideas, but her mind should not be encumbered with them when she was too immature to sort them out. Robin is now a complete Atheist since she is a mature adult.

Later, Barbara pointed out something else to me. She said that she found that often Atheists had considerable emotional difficulty with their Atheism if their parents were very, or excessively, religious. I asked her why she thought so and she said that Atheists, in rejecting religion, often felt guilty and thought that they were rejecting their religious parents along with the religion. It took a sophisticated Atheist to distinguish and hold to both an intellectual position and love for his parents while repudiating an emotional and anti-intellectual position which those parents held. Usually the parents did not make it easy for the Atheist involved, either.

T: *Let me ask your son a question then. What does it feel like to be Madalyn O'Hair's son?*

Jon Murray: What does it feel like to be your mother's son? I don't have a stock answer for something like that. My mother is my mother. I think that is one of the dumbest questions that I am asked and people

ask that question consistently. I've never been anyone else's son, so how could I make a distinction? I don't know what it is that you are asking. I don't know what you want to know. I can't imagine what's behind a question like that.

I *think* that what you are asking is "What does it feel like to be an Atheist?" The best answer to that question that I have ever seen was given by Robert G. Ingersoll (1833-1899), the great American orator, attorney, and debater. I'll read it to you.

> When I became convinced that the Universe is natural — that all the ghosts and gods are myths, there entered into my brain, into my soul, into every drop of my blood, the sense, the feeling, the joy of freedom. The walls of my prison crumbled and fell, the dungeon was flooded with light and all the bolts, and bars, and manacles became dust. I was no longer a servant, a serf, or a slave. There was for me no master in all the wide world — not even in infinite space. I was free
> — free to think, to express my thoughts
> — free to live to my own ideal
> — free to live for myself and those I loved
> — free to use all my faculties, all my senses
> — free to spread imagination's wings
> — free to investigate, to guess and dream and hope
> — free to judge and determine for myself
> — free to reject all ignorant and cruel creeds, all the "inspired" books that savages have produced, and all the barbarous legends of the past
> — free from popes and priests
> — free from all the "called" and "set apart"
> — free from sanctified mistakes and holy lies
> — free from the fear of eternal pain
> — free from the winged monsters of night
> — free from devils, ghosts, and gods.
>
> For the first time I was free. There were no prohibited places in all the realms of my thought — no air, no space, where fancy could not spread her painted wings
> — no chains for my limbs
> — no lashes for my back
> — no fires for my flesh
> — no master's frown or threat
> — no following another's steps
> — no need to bow, or cringe, or crawl, or utter lying words.

I was free. I stood erect and fearlessly, joyously, faced all worlds.

And then my heart was filled with gratitude, with thankfulness, and went out in love to all the heroes, the thinkers who gave their lives for the liberty of hand and brain
— for the freedom of labor and thought
— to those who fell on the fierce fields of war, to those who died in dungeons bound with chains
— to those who proudly mounted scaffold's stairs
— to those whose bones were crushed, whose flesh was scarred and torn
— to those by fire consumed
— to all the wise, the good, the brave of every land, whose thoughts and deeds have given freedom to the sons of men.

And I vowed to grasp the torch that they had held, and hold it high, that light might conquer darkness still.

T: *Mrs. O'Hair, were your parents Atheists?*

Mrs. O'Hair: No, my father was Presbyterian and the family attended the Presbyterian church. I need to add a word here about my mother. She was reared as a Lutheran, but back in the early part of this century when a woman married it was considered proper for her to attend her husband's church. During the entire time of their marriage, 50½ years, mother attended the Presbyterian church only. But when anyone asked her what her religion was, she promptly said Lutheran. So, I was reared in the Presbyterian church with mother interpreting that to me in our home from her own Lutheran heritage.

T: *Well, what happened? What caused you to turn your back on God?*

Mrs. O'Hair: Please, let's not be melodramatic. I know that the predominant folk tale is that something traumatic happens to a person and that person is so emotionally injured that he turns from god. The village Atheist is always a hunchback, or blind in one eye, or has some other physical residual of a traumatic event. But that's not real life. Almost all Atheists come to Atheism by the route that I took. I engaged in one of the most dangerous occupations in the world.

T: *What was that? I knew it. I knew it. What was it?*

A: Reading.

T: *Reading!*

A: Yes, reading. I read the Bible from cover to cover one weekend when I was in grade school.

T: *You can't read the Bible from cover to cover in a weekend. This is no ordinary book.*

A: It is an ordinary book, a horrible one, but quite ordinary in that category. And, one can read it from cover to cover quite easily.

T: *What did you think about it?*

Mrs. O'Hair: I thought it was a horrible book. I came away stunned with the hatred, the brutality, the sado-masochism, the cruelty, the killing, the ugliness. Oh, I suppose that words like sado-masochism were not in my vocabulary at that time, since I was a child, but I could see the obvious lies, the disgusting stories —

T: (Interrupting) *You're not talking about the New Testament now. I admit the Old Testament is pretty hairy, but Jesus Christ is a God of love.*

A: The New Testament is worse than the Old. Your Jesus Christ is a despicable man. Don't you read this book? Can't you understand? Don't you hear what he says as a theme?

Matthew 10:34, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword."

35, "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother. . . ."

Mark 10:29, "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or child, or lands, for my sake, and the gospels' "

30, "But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time. . . ."

Mark 13:12, "Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death."

Luke 12:51, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division."

52, "For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three."

53, "The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother. . . ."

Luke 14:26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

Luke 19:27, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

T: *I never read that! This is out of context, out of context.*

A: You say that like a broken record, "out of context, out of context," but it is your minister who has taught you "out of context." Every Sunday he stands in that pulpit and reads a verse or two and then elaborates on it. He NEVER reads a whole thematic statement which threads through the entire Bible. Yet, you have the temerity to charge us with taking "out of context"? We Atheists know your book; you don't. We study it objectively. You accept it on faith. The New Testament! Alright, hear a few more things from the New Testament.

Do you *really* believe this: "Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases." Luke 9:1. Do you think, first, that there are devils and, second, that power and authority over them can be assigned to agents?

Or, what about ". . . in my name shall they cast out devils." Mark 16:17. Can you cast out devils?

T: *If I knew how to cast out devils, I would cast out the one who possesses you.*

A: Again, we Atheists dislike very much turning to your Bible to try to teach you — but before we leave this matter of the Old and the New Testament, we want to point out to you that if you consider just these so-called books alone, not other related material, there is no hell in the Old Testament. It is your "love filled" Jesus Christ of the New Testament who invented the idea of an eternal hell of punishment — for a difference of opinion with him, alone! Any god that can dream up the idea of hell is not fit for human invention and the New Testament Jesus is more bloodthirsty and lip-licking over the idea of suffering in hell than any of the Old Testament characters could have ever hoped to be.

It is very obvious to anyone who looks at the Bible as a whole message to humankind that Judeo-Christianity is anti-life, anti-woman, anti-joy, anti-peace, anti-sex, anti-freedom —

T: (Interrupting) *I object to your saying that it is anti-life, especially* —

A: (Interrupting) When the total object of your life is to prepare for your death and your acceptance in the hereafter you are talking about an anti-life philosophy.

This is particularly pernicious for young people — especially for young men. If a young man can be convinced that he is going to find a place in heaven, he will be willing to give his life in a senseless war like our undeclared war in Viet Nam, or the battle over the Falkland Islands. If our nation can be convinced of a virgin birth, an idea which is not only absurd, but insulting, then it can be convinced of the need for a Federal Reserve Board. If our women can be convinced that Jesus walked on the water, they can be convinced that "woman's place is in the home." One irrational idea set gives credence to another irrational idea set.

T: *That's your opinion of the Holy Book, but I have a different opinion and so does everyone else.*

A: Indeed, they do. But have you ever wondered why no one says anything? Robert Ingersoll answered that too. Here is how he put it:

> Somebody ought to tell the truth about the Bible. The preachers dare not, because they would be driven from their pulpits. Professors in college dare not, because they would lose their salaries. Politicians dare not. They would be defeated. Editors dare not. They would lose subscribers. Merchants dare not, because they might lose customers. Men of fashion dare not, because they would lose caste. Even clerks dare not, because they might be discharged. And so I thought I would do it myself.

And, incidentally, he did and he did it well.
And when the ministers complained, he told the public:

> Ministers wonder how I can be wicked enough to attack the Bible.
>
> I will tell them.
>
> This book, the Bible, has persecuted, even unto death, the wisest and the best. This book stayed and stopped the onward movement of the human race. This book poisoned the fountains

of learning and misdirected the energies of man.

This book is the enemy of freedom, the support of slavery. This book sowed the seeds of hatred in families and nations, fed the flames of war, and impoverished the world. This book is the breastwork of kings and tyrants — the enslaver of women and children. This book has corrupted parliaments and courts. This book has made colleges and universities the teachers of error and the haters of science. This book has filled Christendom with hateful, cruel, ignorant, and warring sects. This book taught men to kill their fellows for religion's sake. This book founded the Inquisition, invented the instruments of torture, built the dungeons in which the good and loving languished, forged the chains that rusted in their flesh, erected the scaffolds whereon they died. This book piled fagots under the feet of the just. This book drove reason from the minds of millions and filled the asylums with the insane.

This book has caused fathers and mothers to shed the blood of their babes. This book was the auction block on which the slave-mother stood when she was sold from her child. This book filled the sails of the slave-trader and made merchandise of human flesh. This book lighted the fires that burned 'witches' and 'wizards.' This book filled the darkness with ghouls and ghosts, and the bodies of men and women with devils. This book polluted the souls of men with the infamous dogma of eternal pain. This book made credulity the greatest of virtues, and investigation the greatest of crimes. This book filled nations with hermits, monks, and nuns — with the pious and the useless. This book placed the ignorant and unclean saint above the philosopher and philanthropist. This book taught man to despise the joys of this life, that he might be happy in another — to waste this world for the sake of the next.

I attack this book because it is the enemy of human liberty — the greatest obstruction across the highway of human progress.

Let me ask the ministers one question: How can you be wicked enough to defend this book?

T: *It just appears to me that you Atheists have more faith than any religious people have. You have faith in reason and you have faith in mankind.*

A: We don't "have faith" in anything. What we feel from what we

perceive we don't call faith. We know that all humankind has to rely on is itself. Nothing or nobody is going to help solve human problems. If we don't do it, it isn't going to be done. And, we know — further than that — that we can't guess at answers. We must try to analyze, to comprehend, to move reasonably trying to take all factors into consideration.

T: *I call it faith. And, the faith I have is in God, not in man and not in reason. Both of those are fallible, but God is infallible.*

A: Since all of religion is make-believe you can make the rules that you want to make. But, where we Atheists say "NO" is when you attempt to include us in your insanity. As the old saying goes, "Include us out." But, you see you are not content to have someone outside of your system. If one person remains outside that system this is living proof that your god has not conquered all.

We Atheists theorize that this is why you are so angry and hostile that we even exist. We are walking, talking, thinking evidence that your system is not all inclusive and your god is not all powerful.

Every one of you, at one time or another, have found yourself in a situation when you thought, "There can't be a god. If there was a god, he would not have permitted this to happen." Every one of you has been through that experience. Later, for whatever reasons, you got back into "the god system." But, you know you had those doubts and seeing us, hearing us, you are listening to and understanding your own doubts exhibited in another person outside of yourself. We personify your doubts. This is why you are so upset hearing us and seeing us. If you have all of your doubts under control, no matter what we said or how we said it, we could not bother you. But, we do bother you because, and only because, you have not been able to quell your own doubts.

T: *Have you ever thought that the reverse is true and that you Atheists protest so much because you know in your hearts that there is a God?*

A: We protest because we have seen in history, and we see currently in our culture, the results of holding irrational idea sets. How much agony has been caused to individual American Indians when the Indian nations within our nation are treated as less than dogs? All one needs to do is to read the history of the struggle of women of our nation just to be enfranchised. The position of women and the roots of it in Judeo-Christianity are powerfully drawn in Madalyn O'Hair's booklet, *Women*

& Atheism: The Ultimate Liberation. Passions have been high in all of the fights of liberation.

Currently we have many so-called liberation fights. There is Gay Lib, Women's Lib, Kids' Lib, Chicanos' Lib, but all of these are only partial freedoms which this group or that wants to win. The Atheists are looking for the ultimate liberation: liberation of the mind. The human mind has been under too many shackles for too long. We think we Atheists love the statement of Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), a Russian Anarchist, better than any other short pithy summary. In fact, we have framed it and hung it in our Board Meeting room at The American Atheist Center in Austin, Texas. It says, simply and succinctly, but with much pathos:

Free Religion's Prisoners

> The idea of god implies the abdication of human reason and justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty and necessarily ends in the enslavement of mankind both in theory and practice.
>
> He who desires to worship god must harbor no childish illusions about the matter but bravely renounce his liberty and his humanity.

T: *As a born-again Christian, I find this to be very offensive.*

A: As human beings we find Judeo-Christianity to be very offensive. But in a lighter vein, you cannot be a "born again Christian." There is not and cannot be any such.

T: *I AM a born-again Christian.*

A: No, because, you see, everyone when they are born, fresh out of the uterus, is an Atheist. No baby has any religion. Of course, as soon as they are born, snatched hot out of the mother's womb, adults begin to work on them to try to indoctrinate them. But all babies are Atheists: free from theism, free from religion. No baby is born as a Muslim, or a Jew, or a Baptist, or a Roman Catholic, or a Hindu. They are born free and then indoctrinated. When they attain an age of intellectual discretion and they repudiate that indoctrination, they become "Born Again Atheists." They are back to the purity of their beginning before any of this dreadful theistic philosophy was put into their receptive, but undiscriminating, little minds.

T: *But you do have dogma attached to your position.*

A: What dogma? Where? Along the way we have tried to make clarifying statements as to our positions.

In fact, Atheists have made two different formal statements that are of lasting importance to us. The first was made by the Murray-O'Hairs in the legal case which removed Bible/prayer from the public schools. In that case, we insisted on being identified as Atheists. The attorneys counter-insisted that we write a very short statement as to the "credo" of Atheists to put into the pleadings so that the court would have a succinct statement of our stand. We did that. It is a statement of position, we think, rather than a credo. We'll read it to you; you will understand the legal references.

> Your petitioners are Atheists and they define their lifestyle as follows: An Atheist loves himself and his fellow man instead of a god. An Atheist accepts that heaven is something for which we should work now — here on earth — for all men together to enjoy. An Atheist accepts that he can get no help through prayer but that he must find in himself the inner conviction and strength to meet life, to grapple with it, to subdue it and to enjoy it. An Atheist accepts that only in a knowledge of himself and a knowledge of his fellowman can he find the understanding that will help to a life of fulfillment.
>
> Therefore, he seeks to know himself and his fellowman rather than to know a god. An Atheist accepts that a hospital should be built instead of a church. An Atheist accepts that a deed must be done instead of a prayer said. An Atheist strives for involvement in life and not escape into death. He wants disease conquered, poverty vanquished, war eliminated. He wants man to understand and love man. He wants an ethical way of life. He accepts that we cannot rely on a god nor channel action into prayer nor hope for an end of troubles in a hereafter. He accepts that we are — in a great sense — our brothers' keepers in that we are, *first*, keepers of our own lives; that we are responsible persons, that the job is here and the time is now."

T: *Like I said, you Atheists have more faith than we Christians do.*

A: This is NOT faith. It is a recognition of the realities of human life, "what we have to work with" and "what we have to work for" — if we can end several clauses with a preposition here!

T: *Well, well, aren't we careful with our speech.*

A: Atheists are convinced that we must be clear and concise and having a mastery of our native tongue is important to all of us. Speaking of that, and continuing the train of thought here, the second statement which Atheists have made was a resolution adopted unanimously at the First Annual National American Atheist Convention, in 1970. This is the first time in the world that any group ever got together, deliberately, *under the banner of Atheism.*

We read that to you now too:

> We, the Texas convention of American Atheists, . . . affirming reason as our supreme authority and seeking to enhance the quality of life, do declare that we:
>
> — ask to be accepted as individuals;
>
> — deplore the economic, social, psychological, and physical reprisals to which we are subject when we identify ourselves as Atheists;
>
> — seek fair and impartial media coverage and equal time;
>
> — seek historical recognition for Atheists who have contributed to the American way of life;
>
> — affirm a strict adherence to the constitutional principle of separation of state and church;
>
> — affirm our intention to pursue our goals only within the legal routes open to us;
>
> — affirm that the ethical man does not need to be a traditionally religious man;
>
> — seek an education for all children that will allow them to pursue, to the fullest, their intellectual capabilities;
>
> — affirm that all life is basic and that the ecological balance of our planet must be conserved;
>
> — affirm that women have an equal right to self-fulfillment;
>
> — accept all human beings as individuals.

T: *Didn't your Ingersoll get his horn in too? He's your Jesus Christ.*

A: With Atheists, it is the idea that counts, not who has the idea. We are eclectic and take whence we can. We have no Jesus Christ. Some Atheists said it better than others did — they wrote poetry in their thoughts. And, yes, Ingersoll had something to say too. He was asked what would satisfy his heart, what he thought religion should be, and this is what he said:

To love justice, to long for the right, to love mercy, to pity the suffering, to assist the weak, to forget wrongs and remember benefits, — to love the truth, to be sincere, to utter honest words, to love liberty, to wage relentless war against slavery in all its forms, to love wife and child and friend, to make a happy home, to love the beautiful in art, in nature, to cultivate the mind, to be familiar with the mighty thoughts that genius has expressed, the noble deeds of all the world, to cultivate courage and cheerfulness, to make others happy, to fill life with the splendor of generous acts, the warmth of loving words, to discard error, to destroy prejudice, to receive new truths with gladness, to cultivate hope, to see the calm before the storm, the dawn beyond the night, to do the best that can be done and then to be resigned — this is the religion of reason, the creed of science. This satisfies the heart and the brain.

T: *I want to question you about something else. We Christians knowing that the world was created in the year 4004 B.C. —*

A: (Interrupting) Oh, do you now? Who said so?

T: *Jerry Falwell says so, that's who.*

A: Again, you are incorrect. The idea was put forth by a Christian traveller and soldier, probably about the year 195. He was Sextus Julius Africanus and he wrote a history of the world in five books. In that history he said that the world was created on September 1, 4004 B.C. Later, James Ussher (1581-1656), an Irish prelate and Christian "scholar" (we use the word jokingly) emphasized it again. Later still, John Lightfoot (1602-1675), an English divine, said that the creation took place on a Friday morning at 9:00 A.M.

T: *As long as I have you Atheists to give me all the answers, I don't need to look up anything, do I? Alright, already, then the Christian idea has been around for a long time. And, the world is only about 6,000 years old.*

A: We have been through this a dozen times in the United States and you know it. In the period July 10-21, 1925, the infamous Scopes Monkey trial was held in Dayton, Tennessee; in 1980 there was the Scientific/Creationism trial in Sacramento, California; and in 1981 there

was the Arkansas Creation/Evolution trial and each time you folks lose out. Science simply has the answer to this one and if you think science does not have the answer, go take a look at the Grand Canyon of Arizona. That will answer a helluva lot of questions for you.

T: *Oh, then you are Darwinians.*

A: Not specifically "Darwinians" because we know that he did not answer all the questions, but we certainly recognize that he popularized what was then the theory of evolution, that he did an extraordinary amount of research and that his bravery to take on the religious community in his times was something to behold. Remember that Darwin (1809-1882) died a hundred years ago and that during his life the churches had more of a stranglehold than they do now and that during his times education was not accessible to the masses of humankind.

T: *Don't evade the question: Do you believe in the theory of evolution?*

A: Again and again, we must admonish you that Atheists do not have "belief systems." Evolution has been demonstrated and it is NOT a theory. Evolution is an ongoing physical phenomenon that is observable around us everywhere in nature. This time, you can pick up a dictionary and look at it. We can read the definition to you: "Evolution — the continuous genetic adaptation of organism or species to the environment by the integrating agencies of selection, hybridization, inbreeding and mutation." Nothing in that definition says anything about "creation" or "origin."

T: *We can be as smart as you. When a previous caller read the definition of Atheism from the dictionary, you said that Atheists did not write that definition. Well, we Christians did not write this definition of evolution, and we are strong enough to force the dictionary to change it now.*

A: We will discuss your censorship and your book burnings later. We know that Christians are good at that. But right now we are speaking to the idea of evolution. The scientific discipline of evolution does not speak to how organisms, in general, first appeared but rather how they have reacted or changed with respect to pressures put on them by their environment.

All scientists agree — and that includes your "scientific creationist" scientists — that evolutionary development occurs in all plants and animals to some extent.

T: *No they don't. We don't admit nothing [sic].*

A: Ah, but you do. You eat hybrid corn, hybrid tomatoes, and other vegetables and fruits. You breed hybrid cattle. The story of the change in body build of the Japanese people in the last fifty years is significant. We all know this. All of your Christian scientists know this. You know it. You can crossbreed roses in your backyard. You know that different distinctive traits can be produced. Now, don't get off on a nonsense position. If you want us to handle your questions with any kind of seriousness you have to yield to the common sense observations of your own life.

Evolution is a fact. All living things will change or adapt to changes in their environment and they have done so. The only disagreement between evolutionists, *real* scientists in the field, is how that change occurs. Is it purely genetic? What other factors are involved? Does the change occur gradually over a very long period of time or in jumps or spurts, rapidly, with sometimes long periods of time with no change in between those periods. These questions remain not fully answered at this time? The scientists remain divided on them with respect to what their individual research areas show. This does not mean that they disagree on the proposition that "all things evolve." They don't. Evolution is an ongoing mechanism of change. We just need to know more about how it works in specific instances.

T: *God created all living things, just exactly the way they are.*

A: Oh? Then he created multiple sclerosis? cancer? children defective at birth? He planned the elephant man? sickle cell anemia as an hereditary disease for the blacks? the Tay-Sachs syndrome for the Jews? What did he have against them? Was it because he was a white god?

T: *Disease is caused by sin.*

A: Against a whole race, like the blacks?

T: *Against all the races. When Adam and Eve sinned they brought disease and death into the world.*

A: A great American patriot laid that argument to rest, two hundred years ago. Do you know who Colonel Ethan Allen was?

T: *Sure, he was a colonial who made furniture. There are all kinds of Ethan Allen furniture stores everywhere right now in the U.S. today.*

A: (Groan) The word was "colonel" Ethan Allen, not "colonial" Ethan Allen. There would have been no United States if there had been no Ethan Allen. Don't you remember the battle of Ticonderoga?

T: *Yeeeeeaaah, I guess I do.*

A: Ethan Allen (1738-1789) was not only an American revolutionary, with his Green Mountain Militia, but he was a deist and he wrote against Christianity as all deists did in our country in revolutionary times.

He wrote a particular book entitled *Reason, The Only Oracle of Man*, and in that book he took on the idea of original sin. His argument basically could be put like this:

"If you do something rotten and despicable, don't blame it on me. You can't 'impute' your rottenness or your dastardly deeds to me.

"Likewise if you are a paragon of virtue, you can't 'impute' your good deeds, or your good ideas to me. They can't do anything for me; I am my own man."

He identified this as the Christian doctrine of "imputation," which is what the Christians called it for a long time. That is, since Adam and Eve did an evil thing — and more than incidentally, the "evil" which they did was to eat of the tree of knowledge, which tells you something right there about your god when he thought knowledge was evil — their "sin" was passed on to all of humankind.

Ethan Allen said, "You can not impute the consequences of a deed of one person to anyone else, particularly to the unborn. Adam and Eve could not pass disease, sin, and death on to their progeny and conversely no one person is "good" enough to absorb the consequences of the deeds of someone else; therefore, Jesus Christ could not take that sin away."

One of the writers of American Atheists' children's books, Eddie Ruth, says it all in one sentence, which is the title of one of her books: *I Didn't Eat The Apple.*

T: *You are wrong, because they did eat the apple.*

A: Where in the Bible does it say they ate an apple? It's a figure of speech for the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

T: *Where in the Bible does it say it's a tree of knowledge of good and evil?*

A: You know better than to ask us that. It's in Genesis 2:16, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:"

17, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it."

And, incidentally, it is in this same chapter of Genesis, verse 22, that the creation of Eve from Adam's rib is given. So, Eve did not know that she was forbidden to eat of this tree of knowledge; the lord god had told Adam only, not Eve. She never met the lord god so she apparently heard the tale only from Adam. In all subsequent passages only "fruit" is mentioned and never the apple.

In any event you try to sidetrack from the issue of evolution. We want to get back to that. The idea began before Darwin but he was the one who was able to do some special observations in the Galapagos Islands.

T: *I thought he was from England.*

A: He was. He was a biologist scientist, called a naturalist in those days, on a surveying ship, the *Beagle*, which was making a trip around the world. The ship stopped at these islands off the coast of Equador, but it stopped many other places to survey and, of course, he made observations everywhere he could. He subsequently wrote a book titled *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or The Preservation of Favored Races in The Struggle for Life*. It was published on November 24, 1859, in London, England, which was his home.

T: *You worship him like a god. You even know the day he published a book.*

A: That is accuracy, not worship. Don't you wish you knew the dates when your New Testament was written?

T: *We know them.*

A: You have no information at all and we will get to that later. But, we

are determined to go on here about evolution. He felt that there were overall evolutionary patterns in his nature observations. He wrote about his idea that organisms change with respect to their environment and sometimes become more complex through a series of such changes. Naturally the religious nuts of that era attacked him.

T: *You are always calling names.*

A: We simply identify groups. Don't willfully include yourself in one of those groups.

The religious fanatics of that era, the 1850s, saw that if new forms of organisms were able to come from existing forms then this could be extrapolated backward far enough that there would be no need for the idea of a creator.

Also a lot of theistic people felt that the notion of man, or woman, being related to what we colloquially refer to as "animals" somehow degraded them. So, Darwin was attacked for his scientific observation and reporting.

T: *I am not related to an ape. A caller before me said that, too. I can see the monkey ancestor in you, but not in me.*

A: However, we are animals. We are a part of the animal community. We were NOT set apart with a special creation. We are quite ordinary. Atheists can accept their position in the animal kingdom and be proud of it. Theists cannot. You all feel that you must be given a special place in nature, a superior place, perhaps even a place "outside" of nature, with your god. Insignificance is a very difficult concept for most people to either understand or accept. Theists can't deal with it.

It is enough for the Atheist to realize that we are the most highly evolved organism *in our category*. But, even if we weren't that, we could be accepting of our place. What we are makes us "special" or "unique" enough. There are many categories of living organisms and each category has its most evolved representative. On the other end of the scales are the most primitive forms. And, one cannot compare across categories. We are the most highly evolved of the primate group of mammals. You might consider a shark, for example, the most highly evolved of predator fish, or the dolphin, which is a cetacean mammal, the most highly evolved sea mammal.

T: *They're both fish.*

A: No, there's a distinction. But, let it go at your calling them both fish. You theists would think in terms of yourselves as being superior to the shark, or to the dolphin, or to any other animal form. And, that is not the case. Superior for what and in what context is the question. You can't hunt like a shark; fish are not your only diet; the water is not your natural environment; swimming is not your common means of locomotion in your environment. You can't compare.

Mrs. O'Hair: There is an old poem that is quite Atheistic and it says the whole thing in a different way. I had to memorize it in the third grade in school:

The mountain and the squirrel
Had a quarrel,
And the former called the latter "Little Prig;"
Bun replied,
"You are doubtless very big;
But all sorts of things and weather
Must be taken in together,
To make up a year
And a sphere.
And I think it no disgrace
To occupy my place.
If I'm not so large as you,
You are not so small as I,
And not half so spry.
I'll not deny you make
A very pretty squirrel track;
Talents differ; all is well and wisely put;
If I cannot carry forests on my back,
Neither can you crack a nut." [Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1845]

A: (Continuing) Scientists, generally, are trying to look at the entire spectrum of organisms, both plants and animals, at individuals within a group as well as groups. They are trying to discover from observation and measurement the life patterns of the individuals and the groups as well as how they relate to one another, to their own species, to the total environment of the world as a whole.

T: *Oh, more kookie environmentalists! Save the butterflies!*

A: We'll ignore that remark. Although you should know that the word

itself and the idea of "ecology," which is also what we are talking about here, the scientific discipline of interrelationship of organisms and their environment, was started by an Atheist. He coined the word and he started the idea. He was Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), a German biologist who presented this to the scientific world in about 1880.

You do try to get a digression going.

What the scientists are doing is to apply the scientific method, which is to gather data from observation and measurement and then to analyze that data to see what patterns, either similarities or differences, emerge.

What you Christians do, those of you who support the idea of "special creation," is to accept the biblical story first, *on faith* — not on evidence, and then you try to go out and gather data which supports that about which you have already made up your mind. Maybe we should say that religion has made up your mind about it for you. This is hardly scientific.

T: *We never said it was scientific.*

A: Ah, but you do. The name of the game now in the public school system is to try to get this Biblical version of creation into the schools as an alternate program called "*scientific* creationism" when it is not scientific at all. If you wanted to study this in a course called "Myths of the World" it would be different, but you are trying to have this garbage put into science books.

T: *It is not garbage.*

A: Well, then would you put into the same science book the story that the world sits on the back of a tortoise and the tortoise sits on the back of an elephant? That's good cosmology from the East, you know, and many people still believe it.

T: *That's not the same as Genesis.*

A: We've been over this ground and you yourself have seen that one chapter in Genesis doesn't agree with the other. Don't you think it's about time that we all simply say that *no one*, no one at all, knows anything about the how or the when or the why of matter and energy in any so-called beginning? Don't you think it is about time that we all say that we really don't know exactly what the first organic carbon chain

was? We really don't know how "life" began. And, those are two different problems: (1) Whence came matter, or energy? and, (2) How did life begin?

T: *You admit you don't have an answer?*

A: It isn't an admission. It is a statement of fact. All the data are not in as yet. All any scientist can do is to take an educated guess. You Christians take *un*educated guesses. Any theist may well be able, in the face of insufficient evidence, to say that a god created matter and say it *on faith* to cover for the lack of data. But that makes the statement worthless. Theists can even go further in their fantasies and say that god created "life" in a particular form, or forms. But there is not one thread of evidence yet to point to anything but a spontaneous generation of life from inorganic material to organic material in a very primitive form, probably a hydrocarbon string, under unusual conditions at a time and place unknown.

The question of origin of "life," however, is an entirely different question from the origin of matter and energy. The "origin of life" question is also independent from the observable system of evolution which is now well documented. You theists tend to lump all three concepts together, when they are separable. Evolution does not speak directly to nor concern itself with "life origin" but only to the types of life and their inter-associations.

T: *You can't prove I'm wrong.*

A: The burden of proof is always on the person(s) who sets forth a theory. The scientists can support that evolution is a fact. You Judeo-Christians who have put forth a "special creation" theory have the burden of proof to establish that there was a *super* natural (*i.e.*, outside of nature) origin of the universe, whatever that is — we really don't know yet. You must prove your thesis of a special creation of man, beasts, and all plants, of flora and fauna, and you also must prove that there has been no evolution of any of the species since that special creation. You have failed in your burden of proof.

Actually the idea of proof is foreign to your proposition. You rely on an *a priori* (deduction from self-evident fact) statement to be "magic" and give you proof. But if this "beginning" was beyond nature, and all we know is nature, then you can never prove something outside of nature.

T: *The Bible tells me so.*

A: Do we have to go back to the Bible again, even for this?

O.K. you asked for it. In Leviticus 11:6 god is describing what man can and can't eat and he adds: "And the hare, because he cheweth the cud. . . ." When did a hare ever chew a cud? And, in Leviticus 11:20, "All fowls that creep, going on all fours, shall be an abomination unto you." Since when did chickens, ducks, geese, or any fowl "creep, going on all fours"? And in Numbers 22:28, "And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou has smitten me these three times?" When did an ass ever talk, other than Billy Graham? And what about Numbers 21:6, "And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." Show us any historical support for fiery serpents, much less proof that they bit people, or that their bite killed. What about the dragons? Isaiah 34:13, "It shall be an habitation of dragons." What about Psalms 91:13, "The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." Look at Deuteronomy 32:33 where there is talk of "the poison of dragons." Or, take Micah 1:8, "I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls." Or perhaps you believe in satyrs, as in Isaiah 13:21, "Owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there." Better yet are the winged serpents and the cockatrices. Isaiah 14:29, "Out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent." A cockatrice was a serpent hatched from *the egg of a cock*, not the egg of a hen. A cockatrice could kill with a mere glance and it drove all other serpents away by its hissing. A satyr is half man and half goat; or half man and half horse, depending on what you are reading. Were these all the special creations of god? And, why don't we have any record of them except in your fairy tale Bible?

Even worse are the four-headed fowls of Ezekiel 1:3-10. "The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest. . . . And I looked, and behold . . . four living creatures . . . they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and everyone had four wings. . . . And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides. . . . As for the likeness of their faces, the four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle."

All god's "special creations," aren't they? That's your god's special creation, isn't it?

T: *I don't think we should bring the Bible into this discussion.*

A: Go back then just to matter itself. The burden of proof is on the creationist to establish the supernatural origin of *just matter alone*. That has nothing to do with the "origin of life" from matter, which in turn has nothing to do with the study of how "life" has changed or evolved. There are three very distinct areas for scientific inquiry, not for speculation by babbling idiots who really think that rabbits eat cuds, a cock can lay an egg, that fowls have four legs, or that a half-man, half-goat can exist. Religion first needs to concern itself with the proof of its first proposition — the supernatural origin of matter — and failing that, as it has, it cannot make assertions in the next two areas.

T: *I'm going to get some of our Scientific Creationist people to send you their material.*

A: Actually, we have not gone into this in depth. We have just started to make some generalized statements as we begin sparring. But, if you will read Frank Zindler's booklet, *"Creation Science": Stupidity or Deception?*, you will have our perception of this public school matter debate. We Atheists have already read yours. Zindler has a reply to it.

T: *Where do you think you're going to go when you die?*

A: Go?

T: *Yes. I already know the answer. You're going to hell.*

A: Atheists simply terminate. We don't "cross over," "pass to the great beyond," "go to our reward," or anything else. We terminate as individual, unique personalities. After oxygen and nutrients in the blood-stream no longer get to the brain, an immediate decomposing or decaying action begins. The entire body rots, decays. There is nowhere to go.

The only life other than our own that we might have is in the memory of our children, our friends, in history perhaps. If one is an artist, one's handiwork can live on. Even one's words and ideas can live on, in a book. But this means nothing to the person who dies.

T: *I was listening to just the last few minutes of this interview here, on the way home, and I'd like to ask you a question: What do you mean by "an Atheist"?*

A: There is really no way we can repeat that all again. We know there is a problem with some of you hearing a part of a radio or television program, but we try to approach each one of these questions afresh and give it "the best we got," but often the answers are a little complicated. For just a one-liner here: an Atheist is simply someone who is free from theism, from religion.

And, could we have another question, please?

T: *Mrs. O'Hair, I know that you are a Jew out to destroy America.*

Mrs. O'Hair: (Laughing) I know that rumor is also afloat. Let me tell you a bit of my heritage. However, I feel that every person in public life has a right to a private life. What is my private life I do not "share" with anyone. However, there are things on public record. My father's family was Scot-Irish Presbyterian. They have been in this country for over 370 years and at about four or five generations per each century, you can count approximately 15 to 18 generations of Scot-Irishmen in my background. My family names, stretching back, are McCracken, Mc Clure, McHenry, Mays, Snyder . . . and my family belongs to the D.A.R. and the S.A.R., that is, Daughters of the American Revolution and Sons of the American Revolution. My mother's family was German. They came to the United States three generations ago, from Westphalia and from Bayern, in Germany. This family was Lutheran as far back as anyone could measure.

T: *I also heard that you were Roman Catholic.*

A: No Roman Catholics in our family at all.

T: *Mrs. O'Hair, you were married, weren't you?*

Mrs. O'Hair: Yes.

T: *How can an Atheist get married? That's a sacrament. It's a holy union. It has to be blessed by the church.*

A: Fortunately for a lot of people all over the world, civil marriage ceremonies are now recognized by the laws of most countries.

Most Atheists take a very different viewpoint of marriage than most of you religious folk. It appears to us that this is a physical, psychological, intellectual, emotional union which is of such a nature of privacy

that it is beyond the sanction of the state. When two persons decide that they want to live together, that is a personal decision of theirs. We do not understand why the state should give a license for fornicating, like it gives a license for hunting or for fishing.

T: *It isn't a license for fornicating.*

A: Tell us then what it is. You have a female voice, caller. Now, if you and a man decide to buy a house together and pool your money for that, you don't need a license to do it. If you decide to live in that house together, you still don't need a license. You can work together, talk together, laugh together, eat together. You can do your laundry together, cook together, and be companions together for years, without the need of any license. It is only when you decide that you want to fornicate with each other that you must go out and get a state license for that.

Relationships are not built on legality. They are built on love and mutual respect.

Every single Atheist organization that ever existed in our nation advocated free love, or freedom of association of male and female without a license for fornication intruding into the relationship.

T: *Oh, you support whoredom!*

A: Atheists call this set of ideas a position of advocacy of free love.

T: *Oh, so it's "free" love, is it?*

A: No, not "free" love, but "free love." Free love is not the same as a free lay. For instance, Clarence and Ruby Darrow lived together in a free love arrangement for about forty years before they decided to get married, apparently for property and economic considerations of devisement — that is, writing wills. Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir had a free love relationship until he died. Apparently, Mary, the mother of Jesus, had the same kind of relationship with the holy ghost.

T: *Oh, you are all going to burn in hell for your malicious blasphemy. Why this station let you on the air, I don't know. This is the worst thing I ever heard of in my life —*

A: (Interrupting) Therefore, now, the official position of the American Atheist organization on marriage is that if Atheists want a legal union, that's their business. If they want a common-law arrangement, that's their business. If they want to live together, that's their business. Our organization, the church, the state, parents, relatives, children, have no right to tell two adults what they should or should not do in respect to their sex lives.

T: *My God! You even support the right of faggots!*

A: What do you mean by that?

T: *Fruits, queers, homosexuals. You support the right of these people to transgress the laws of God.*

A: What laws of god?

T: *God forbids sexual deviation. It's in the Bible.*

A: Where?

T: *I don't know where. It's in there. It's in the Good Book.*

A: O.K. You always have a reason but you never can give it. We'll tell you where it is. It is in Leviticus 20:13 and it says: "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon them."

We presume, then, that you are advocating that all the gays in the nation be put to death, put to a bloodbath?

T: *You mean it really says "kill them"?*

A: ". . . they shall be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon them." We can hear the tone in your voice, you are slobbering in anticipation of the gore.

T: *Well, what do you think? Do you Atheists think that this perversion, this — what did God call it?*

A: It is a so-called Mosaic law, handed down from god, for at the

beginning of Leviticus 20, the chapter starts out "And the Lord spake unto Moses saying:" and then this quote from the lord follows, with the lord calling the act of a man lying with a man as he lies with a woman an "act of abomination."

T: *Yes, an abomination. That describes it right. It's abominable. What do Atheists think about this?*

A: What do Atheists think about this? Different kinds of Atheists think different thoughts about it. But, we can tell you the official position of the American Atheist organization.

T: *Well, what is that?*

A: Our official position is that everyone's body belongs to each person individually and the decision which is made in respect to sex is personal; what one decides to do about it, or with it, is the business of that person. We also feel that human sexuality presents many problems in the world cultures and that people seek out individual solutions. We are also certain that it is impossible to attempt to address or control such an intimate activity as sexual behavior. Therefore, formerly we said that whatever two consenting adults did was their business.

T: *You used to say that? What do you say now?*

A: The world gets more complicated and more complicated and we had to recently change that to read "whatever two 'or more' consenting adults did was their business."

T: *Oh, my God, it gets worse as you go on. You even encourage these faggots, with your approval.*

A: We are just as realistic as we can be. Now, homosexuality upsets some individual Atheists. We are speaking for the organization and because we are, it became necessary to do something about those Atheists who are upset over homosexuality. Therefore, we have encouraged *Atheist* homosexuals to form their own Atheist group since their concern for their sexual life-style has a higher priority with them than their Atheism. The group formed in San Francisco, California, and gave itself the name GALA (Gay Atheist League of America). In about three years there was some internal difficulty over several state/church

separation issues and a rump group in Houston, Texas, broke away from GALA to form AGA (American Gay Atheists).

T: *I can't believe this. It is just impossible that you would endorse this kind of behavior. I am so shocked that I had to call in.*
What about self-abuse? I suppose you endorse that, too?

A: What could you possibly mean by self-abuse? Why would anyone want to abuse themselves? What are you talking about?

T: *You know well and good what I am talking about. Self pollution. Onanism.*

A: Onanism? What do you think that is?

T: *You know what it is. I can't say these things. I can't engage in profanity.*

A: Surely you jest. There is no such thing as profanity. How can some words be fane and other words profane?

T: *Well, they are.*

A: Again, Atheists do not accept that idea at all. Words are words. It's really dumb to say profane and fane, or scene and obscene. Have you looked that up in the dictionary? or the encyclopedia? A "fane" is a temple, a church. The prefix "pro" means "earlier than." So, pro-fane means something earlier than your church? The word profane itself means "not concerned with religion or religious purposes." and the prefix "ob" means "in the way of" and "scene" is the old rendering of "sense," so ob-scene is an obstacle to, or in the way of, the senses. All of this is very curious.
Now please tell us why the churches would put a special charge on certain words and tell you that you can't use them.

T: *Well, they did.*

A: But, this is dumb. If we tell you that someone is fornicating, is that obscene to you?

T: *No, that's a civilized way of saying it.*

A: But, we can't say they're (fucking)? (Blipped)

T: *Of course not. That's crude and it's blasphemous.*

A: But can you tell us the difference between fornicating and (fucking)? (Blipped)

T: *There is no difference.*

A: But, you can say the one word and you can't say the other?

T: *Well, one is Latin, you know. The other is a four-letter word.*

A: We can't use four-letter words?

T: *No. God forbid!*

A: Then, we must say, "Kiss me with your labia" instead of "Kiss me with your lips"? After all, "lips" is a four-letter word. Or, we must say, "I bumped my proboscis on it" instead of "I bumped my nose on it," since "nose" is a four-letter word?

T: *That isn't the same. You know perfectly well what I mean.*

A: It's the same principle. In all of your thinking about "dirty" words, you never really have thought about what they are, or why you are officially not supposed to use them, ordered not to do so by the church, have you?

Dirty words fall into three categories: 1) They name life-supporting parts of the body; 2) They name ordinary functions or uses of those life-supporting parts; and 3) They are words in derogation of women. Doesn't that tell you something about religion?

Let us ask you a couple of questions. How long could you live without urinating? defecating? Yet, you can't ever refer to this function unless you clothe the idea in a Latin term? Is it possible for you to be alive without your mother and father having engaged in fornication? Yet, you are prohibited from using the word? You came into life from the activity. How nutty can you be? Do you even know the Latin word for "breaking air"?

T: *Ahhhhhhh.*

A: You don't even know it. All you know is (farting) (Blipped), isn't it? Let us educate you. Look it up in the dictionary. Next time you can say, "Oh, excuse me. I didn't mean to expel that *flatus*."

T: *I'm going to turn off my radio. I will never listen to this station again as long as I live.*

A: What you mean to say is that you are glued to every word. You wouldn't turn it off for anything in the world. This conversation titillates you. It turns you on. You get the tingles from it.

Let's go a littler further. There are 13 "dirty" words, but there isn't even a dirty word for the most forbidden topic in the world, is there? What's the dirty word for menstruation? That is so forbidden that you don't even have a four-letter word for it.

The idea was to remove from you the ability to discuss these parts of the body, or their functions, to even think about them, since — for instance — menstruation did not even have a colloquial name. Why do you suppose all this went on in the name of religion?

Madalyn O'Hair has another book she is working on that will be out soon, too. The title of it is *An Original Theory in Respect to The Origin of Religion*. It might give you some answers.

But, let's go back to onanism. There's a lot of confusion about this. What you are really talking about is masturbation, isn't it?

T: *Well, yes. What do you Atheists think about masturbation?*

A: Does it feel good?

T: *I can't believe that this conversation is going on.*

A: Does it hurt you or anybody else?

T: *I'm going to report this to my minister.*

A: If it feels good and it certainly doesn't hurt you, or anyone else, do it. Relax and enjoy it. Don't be uptight. Everybody does it, in one form or another, whether they admit it or not.

Now there are some Bible citations regarding this. What, for example, do you think that Jesus Christ meant in the Bible when he said, in Matthew 5:30, "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee. . . ."?

T: *Oh, my God. Oh, my God!*

A: Well, of course, if every man who masturbates would cut off his right hand, we would have a nation of one-handed men, wouldn't we?

T: *Oh, my God!*

A: Of course, we suppose that some men use the left hand instead of the right hand . . .

T: *Oh, Mary, mother of Jesus . . .*

A: You see how dangerous it is to follow the Bible to the letter? When you say that this is an inspired book, written by god, you can get into a lot of difficulty.

T: *It is just so incredible that you are allowed to say all this — in public — in the United States.*

A: Remember the First Amendment and "freedom of speech."

T: *But you go too far.*

A: We don't go nearly far enough. You brought up the subject or we would not be on it.

Now to get back to onanism, which you have completely confused with masturbation, the term is in the Old Testament. It was Old Testament law that if a man died, his wife became the wife of his brother. There was polygamy constantly with the Jewish tribes. The Mormons were right in interpreting the Old Testament to permit polygamy. The brothers were expected to sire children by these wives of their deceased kin. So, the story is that a Jew by the name of Judah had two sons. The first-born was named Er. The second-born was named Onan. Now, hear the story directly from Genesis 38:6-10:

> 6. And Judah took a wife for Er his first-born, whose name *was* Tamar.
>
> 7. And Er, Judah's first-born, was wicked in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord slew him.
>
> 8. And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother.
>
> 9. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came

to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled *it* on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother.

10. And the thing which he did displeased the Lord; wherefore he slew him also.

Of course, there are several things about this tale which are striking. The first and most obvious is that the lord was walking around in Israel and he was killing people if they got out of line, or if he didn't like them, or if they "were wicked in his sight" — whatever that meant, or for any number of trivial reasons.

Apparently, the lord was a Peeping Tom, with a very close observation of events, because he saw Onan and Tamar, the woman who was the widow of Er, in bed fornicating and he watched closely enough that he saw Onan withdraw his penis and ejaculate on the floor when it was time for his orgasm. The lord became so angry about this that he killed Onan.

Some Jewish rabbis have interpreted this to be an acceptable method of birth control. It is called "withdrawal" in ordinary language and *coitus interruptus* in Latin. If you look up onanism in the dictionary, or in the encyclopedia, or in a sex education book, you can see that it is described as "coitus deliberately interrupted to prevent insemination." It is also secondarily described as "masturbation" or "self gratification." However, since — if you men imitate the actions of Onan with your brother's widow — the lord is going to kill you, you can see that it presents a problem.

This was not apparently masturbation, for Onan "went in unto his brother's wife." The crime was in *not* impregnating the widow.

The idea of masturbation, with this rabbinical interpretation, is "spilled *it* on the ground." This is all fascinating, since it is just incredible that the lord was observing that closely the individual sexual activity of the Jews in the Bible. This would really amount to keen observation. The lord would practically need to have been under the covers with Onan and Tamar. And, when he was under the cover with those two, there is no saying what was going on in the other tents that night!

T: *I am sorry that I ever brought this up.*

A: We notice that you waited until you heard the whole thing to say that.

T: *You Atheists would turn anything into filth.*

A: We're only reading the Bible, like you ask us to do. Tamar went on to greater things. The third son of Judah grew up. He was called Shelah. Tamar was not sent to the third son. So, she disguised herself as a prostitute and sold herself to Judah, her father-in-law. Her price was a kid (goat). She became pregnant from this and Judah felt that the whole thing only proved that he should have delivered Tamar to his third son, "And he knew her again no more."

The birth story is incredible, since Tamar had twins. At the time of the birth, one of the twins stuck his hand out "when she travailed," and the midwife put a scarlet thread on it, to indicate he was the first-born. The hand then was pulled back and the second twin came out first.

If any sane person can figure out why this story is in the Bible, it would be interesting to hear the explanation.

T: *This is something that no one should be talking about.*

A: Aha! And, you are all ears. You are simply wild to hear it while you pretend that you are not. And, it is in your "precious word" of the Bible, isn't it?

For instance, we know that you will want to hear the story about the golden hemorrhoids.

T: *Hemorrhoids?*

A: Yes, the Israelites accepted golden images of hemorrhoids, that is, golden hemorrhoids, which were placed in the ark of the covenant.

Moderator: *Just as we ended this last session, right before the news, Mr. Murray, you said that the Bible revealed the worship of hemorrhoids. Now, don't you think that's a low blow?*

A: Again, all we do is to respond to what either you, as moderator, or the listeners, ask.

M: *But hemorrhoids being worshipped? And that's in the Bible? Now, now!*

A: This is exactly what we want to point out. Few people realize what this book, which they call the Bible, is.

M: *Well, I'll venture to say that you go too far; you interpret how you want to interpret.*

T: *That's right. I've noticed that in these Atheists. Instead of taking the proper interpretation of the Good Book, they want to make some freaky thing out of the words of the Lord.*

A: Oh boy! Are you asking for it. Again and again and again we need to caution you to know your material before you make this kind of remark.

T: *I have been reading the Bible for over forty years now, and I can tell you that there is no mention of this filth in the Good Book at all.*

A: Do you have your Bible there?

T: *It is always beside me. I know that every person is in need of the strength of the Good Book.*

A: Well, you know the story that Moses allegedly, at the age of fourscore years (that's 80 years old), had a fight with the Pharoah of Egypt and allegedly managed to rescue the Jews from Egypt. He then took them and wandered around in the desert for 40 years. During that time he went up onto a mountain in the wilderness, when he was anywhere from 100 to 120 years old, and received a great number of commandments from a Jewish tribal god and he gave them all to the tribal people whom he had been leading around in the desert. And, when Moses was listing all the things that could happen to anyone who disobeyed god, he listed, among other things, that god had warned that he would smite such persons with hemorrhoids.

T: *He did not. The Lord God would not do such a thing.*

A: Why don't you just read Deuteronomy 28. You said you have your Bible there. Read from about verse 24 to about — oh, verse 27.

T: *You always want to take everything out of context. You just want to read one or two verses.*

A: What does your minister do every Sunday? Does he read the whole chapter?

T: *That's different.*

A: How?

T: *He's a man of God, and he is teaching us with chapter and verse.*

A: We're teaching you, too. Go ahead and read the entire chapter then. We don't care. It is rather long, but —

Moderator: *Now we must have time to get more questions in here. Caller, if you will just read a verse or two, you can check this out later in greater depth. What verse was it you wanted him to read, Mr. Murray?*

A: Read Deuteronomy 28:27.

T: *"The Lord will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods [hemorrhoids], and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed."*

A: That's right, and I see that you are reading from the King James version of the Bible. Do you know what that means?

T: *It's the Saint James. It was translated from the original into English by Saint James.*

A: There is no original Bible. The one you are reading from is one of hundreds of versions which have been put out. Actually, it was King James of England who, in 1604, decided to put a stop to all the arguments about the English text, appointed 54 so-called Biblical authorities and had a text made which was approved by the Church of England. That's what you have in your hands. There are many other versions.

But the important point is that you have read from your own Bible, which belongs to you, that the lord would smite anyone who disobeyed him with the botch of Egypt, the hemorrhoids, with the scab, and with the itch. That sounds like herpes, doesn't it?

But, that's not the point we wanted to make. Your god smites people with hemorrhoids for being disobedient.

T: (Reluctantly) *Well, yes, it does say that.*

A: Now, let's get to what happened with one particular instance of such smiting. If you will turn to 1 Samuel 5, this book tells about the time during the ministry of Samuel as a prophet, a priest, and a judge. He was, allegedy, the founder of the school of the prophets. That makes him a big cheese.

T: *It is NOT scholarly to talk like this.*

A: But your Bible is not scholarship, so we Atheists can address it any way we want to address it, and we can guarantee that the address will never be a respectful one. This book deserves no respect from anyone.

The Philistines had captured the ark of the covenant, which "god" was incapable of protecting, and they took it back to their city, Ashdod. (The ark is described elsewhere in the Bible as a box, about the size of a coffin.) So, god smote everyone in the city with hemorrhoids. That's in verse 6. "But the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods [hemorrhoids], *even* Ashdod and the coasts thereof." The situation was then that everyone was dead (". . . he destroyed them . . .") but at the same time all these corpses were running around with hemorrhoids and there was no Preparation H in sight.

T: *Will you stop that! I'm going to turn off my radio.*
(To the moderator) *How can you permit this to go on the air?*

A: Therefore, the Philistines decided to get rid of the ark and they picked it up and carried it hither and thither. So, the lord smote them again, and that's in verse 9. Remember, they were all dead already and they all had been smitten with hemorrhoids. "And it was so, that, after they had carried it [the reference is to the ark] about, the hand of the Lord was against the city with a great destruction: and he smote the men of the city both small and great, and they had emerods [hemorrhoids] in their secret parts." Now, this was the second batch of hemorrhoids he laid on them, but this time he gave hemorrhoids to the little boys, too, even though everyone was dead.

And the people cried out to get rid of the ark and they went to the lords of the Philistines and said, "Get rid of the ark." Then, in verse 12, "And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods [hemorrhoids]: [This is the third time god smote them with hemorrhoids; and now some of those who had died, had not died.] and the cry of the city went up to heaven." That is, within a day, first the city and the entire shore, then the men small and great, and then every man who had not died — although everyone had died — were all smitten with hemorrhoids. But they kept the ark, and presumably the hemorrhoids, for seven months.

Incidentally, all through the Bible these horror stories are repeated. The people involved were either 1) excessively stubborn, 2) stupid

beyond belief, 3) masochistic, or 4) all three. God has to whip a dreadful punishment on a king, or a tribe, or an individual before any of them will listen. Throughout the Bible, everyone ignores god and goes on his way. I say "his" because generally the references are to men; usually women are not important in the Bible.

But after seven months, the Philistines decided to return the ark to the Jews and to put inside a trespass offering. And here is what that trespass offering was, from 1 Samuel 6:4, "Then said they, What *shall be* the trespass offering which we shall return to him? They answered, Five golden emerods [hemorrhoids], and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for one plague *was* on you all, and on your lords. (5) Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods [hemorrhoids], and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land."

Doing exactly as directed, they made golden images of their hemorrhoids and of the mice and they put them in the ark. Then they put the ark on a cart and they took the cart, driven by kine (that means "cows"), and took it into Bethshemesh into Joshua's field. And when the Jews there decided to look into the ark to see what they had received, here is what happened. This is still chapter 6 of 1 Samuel, but now, verse 19. "And he (that is, god) smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even he smote of the people fifty thousand three score and ten men: and the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten *many* of the people with a great slaughter." Therefore, some other Jews had to fetch the ark back to the house of Abinadab. For all anyone knows those five golden images of hemorrhoids from five persons remained in the ark for all times; it may be that they are still there today, wherever that ark is.

Now, you tell us what god wanted with five golden hemorrhoid images and why he would slaughter 50,070 innocent men, his own Jews, because they looked in a box? He simply didn't want them to see the golden hemorrhoids?

T: *The ways of the Lord are inscrutable.*

A: That's a cop out. Recently there was a Christian adventure film released which has come to be quite a box office draw. The title of it was *Raiders of The Lost Ark*. In that was told the story of an alleged recent finding of the ark of the covenant. We just wonder why the filmmakers were not honest enough to show that the ark contained golden hemorrhoids all this time.

T: *You people need to be taken off the airways. If God wanted that, he wanted that. It is not ours to reason why. God moves in mysterious ways.*

I have another question.

A: First, tell me how 50,070 persons could gather around an ark in a farmer's field and look inside of it. Do you go to football games?

T: *Of course. Every man in America goes to football games.*

A: The Houston Astrodome holds about 50,000 persons. Have you ever been there?

T: *I was at a Houston Oilers' game there.*

A: Could you please tell me how all of those persons could, at one time, look into a little box on that field, a box about as big as an ordinary coffin? And, what would you think of a god who would strike dead everyone at that game for looking into the box?

Can you imagine 50,070 people in the Houston Astrodome struck dead? What could be done with all those bodies? Even the modern hospitals in Houston could not receive them. The mortuaries there are not capable of handling that many corpses. Think of the problem of just removing them from the stadium before they began to bloat and rot. But, the Bible wafts that many bodies away with no difficulties.

T: *I am not going to permit you to criticize my Bible. Every time we mention the Good Book, you start your blasphemy.*

A: Do you know what the word "blasphemy" means? It simply means irreverence, showing a lack of reverence toward something considered sacred or inviolable. Atheists don't "revere" anything. To revere means to fear, or to respect through fear.

Nothing is "sacred" to the searching minds of Atheists. Your Bible, your god, your churches, your belief system all need to be analyzed critically.

Everything about you, your god and your Bible, goes back to an acceptance "on faith," that is, without proof of whatever is told to you by the clergy. If you are going to call in to these "talk shows" wanting to question us, it is necessary that you know that. If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen. If you call us on one of these shows with

your religious ideas, be prepared to have those ideas taken apart.

T: *I can take your ideas apart, too.*

A: Go ahead, we are waiting. If any of our ideas fail us logically, we will abandon them, or reshape them, or correct them. The same can't be said about religion. You have rigid belief systems and if you give way on any part of them, you know the whole will crumble.

Your religion only permits you to operate within a closed set, or approved spectrum, of ideas. Anything beyond that, or outside of that, is forbidden to you. This necessarily constricts your view.

Moderator: *Now, we pause for this important message.*

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On September 15, 1982, Dr. O'Hair was asked to speak at Southwestern (Methodist) University in Georgetown, Texas. After a forty-five-minute speech detailing the tenets of Atheism, the Student Forum asked for written questions to be submitted. For the next ninety minutes, selections from these questions were read to Dr. O'Hair by a member of the faculty, a philosophy professor, a student officer of the Forum Committee, and a senior class student officer. A total of 130 written questions were submitted, of which about one-half were chosen by the panel for Dr. O'Hair to answer orally.

All of the questions are now given here, exactly as they were written, including grammatical and punctuation errors. Please remember in reading these that this represents the thinking of college students in a religious university in central Texas in the year 1982.

Dr. O'Hair has faithfully reproduced her original answers and included also typical replies that she gives to the other questions so that you, the reader, may get the full flavor of what goes on in the colleges and universities where she is invited to speak.

Student: *If religion is such a private affair, then how come you're standing up there right now "preaching about your religion"?*

A: The religious have always attempted to reach out and include everyone in the scope of their religious belief system which they hold. This activity has become so blatant that words which are used specifically to connote religious activity are deliberately used to describe the

activities of those outside of the religious belief system. For example, you say that I am "preaching." I educate. I explicate the Atheist position, but I do not preach. Likewise, I do not "crusade" for Atheism. I do not attempt to "convert."

Why do we not "convert"? If you are a Christian, you are not good enough to be on our team. We don't want to convert you; stay where you are; your thought processes are entirely too screwed up, based on irrational ideas, and you will never be able to rid yourself of them. We suggest that you remain in the church.

The life-style and reasoned intellectual position of Atheists are not to be designated as a "religion." The speech which I have just delivered, using forty-five minutes of the time of about 400 students and forty-five minutes of my time specifically distinguished between Atheism and religion.

I can only exhort you to listen to a speaker and to hear what a speaker says. All too often, you enter these lecture halls with a closed mind and you do not hear, do not understand, nor do you make any attempt to hear or to understand. I cannot help you in that you did not listen to what I had to say, but I can admonish you to be more considerate, to at least be attentive to the words of the next speaker you may invite here.

I will repeat: Religion is a private affair as the situation stands in the United States. I am here talking about Atheism and state/church separation. I have the right to discuss these subjects in a public or a private forum and that right to do so is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, with its guarantee of freedom of speech for all of our citizens. Second, I am a guest speaker at your university. I was invited here by the Student Forum. If the ideas of Atheism are offensive to you, it is not necessary for you to inflict them upon yourself. You have a personal right to boycott this presentation. You came to this speech by invitation, not by coercion.

S: *If you feel Reagan is incompetant [sic] of being President, who do you recommend for an alternative? As you have been told, Reagan's programs (Reaganomics) are based upon a time span which will consume up to the end of this term, and not a miracle 1-year plan.*

A: I am extremely critical of Reagan and do feel that he is not alone incompetent, but that he is dangerous. He is so paranoid concerned with his personal fear of the U.S.S.R., that he would take us into a nuclear armageddon. Since he believes in life after death, he does not think that a nuclear war would be the end of humankind. He would

expect humankind to prosper in some kind of world after this world. That is a basically insane idea.

Reagan is continuing a foreign policy outreach which came into fruition with his predecessors. This is the idea of a "cold war" against the *godless* Communists of the U.S.S.R. The crux of our foreign policy is that we are "morally" right, but the U.S.S.R. is not now nor can it be or become so because of its Atheism. It is now known that every "Christian Democratic Party" in Europe was financed by the C.I.A. with the objective of creating a third bloc of voters which could always, then, support the right wing, particularly along specific issues, to tip the balance against any nascent socialist tendencies in any of those states.

In order to sustain the cold war as foreign policy, it was necessary for our government to deliberately "Christianize" the United States — and our government has done that. That is amply demonstrated in my booklet *War in Viet Nam — The Religious Connection.*

From this has come a strengthening determination of our nation to blow the world to kingdom come rather than yield an inch of accommodation with the U.S.S.R. Since the Christians believe in life after death, this world is of little consequence to them when measured against the promise of life for all eternity in another world. Hence, it is the Christian United States which is the danger to the world.

Meanwhile, Reagan is designating 220 billion dollars to a war-based economy, stripping the social system of the United States of all the accoutrements of civilization. Science, education, medicine, social programs are downgraded, or in some instances negated, in order to funnel too much of our budget to a nuclear war machine. That he proposes to continue to escalate this type of insane activity for the full four years of his administration is to sound an alarm not alone to our nation, but the world. One would hope that he has done his worst already.

If the job of Atheism is to emphasize the use of logic and reason in all human spheres of activity, then it is necessary for us to look at economic and other programs which are not viable intellectual options for humankind. We do that when it is demanded of us. Reaganomics is the old "trickle down" theory of aid the super-rich and super-capitalists and from their success will trickle down a little of that largess into the hands of the ordinary working man. This was the policy of rapist nascent capitalism, when the heads of the exploiting companies were called the "Robber Barons," over a century ago. This is what so thoroughly crushed the mass of humankind that Communism was born out of the resulting abyss and hatred for that system. Even this laissez-faire capitalism, as it was then called, recognized that reforms were needed (even

that many years ago) in order for the system to remain in power. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was the great reformer of the American capitalist system and without his intervention with those reforms, the system would have failed in the 1930s. A more enlightened approach to the total culture of humankind is necessary now, which must rest on an understanding that there are more inhabitants in the world than just the super-rich.

The anomaly of Reaganomics, cast in the Christian mode, is obvious. For, according to the Christian ethic, a rich man can never get into heaven. Your Jesus allegedly reaches out to even the least of humankind, while Reagan gives his hand only to the upper crust.

I would not fear Reagan, a cinema mouthpiece, if I knew what group was putting words into his mouth, whose robot he was.

S: *If you do not believe in anything, how can you believe in yourself or what you are talking about?*

A: I have said that Atheists have no "belief systems." I exhort you to go to your dictionary and look up the definition of "belief." A belief is something posited on mere faith without any kind of supporting evidence, logic, or reason to sustain it. You can bet that I know I am here. Every one of my ideas has been tested against all kinds of other ideas, using logic and reason. I have even gone so far as to say, and I repeat it now, one does not have a right to have an opinion unless one has thoroughly studied all aspects, indeed every facet, of all sides of the issue in question, its history, its ultimate effect, everything about it. A basic fact situation must be correct and then one can build on that. I do not have a belief system that I am expostulating here tonight. What I ask you to do is to take every statement that I make and examine it yourself, by the scientific method, and come to your own conclusions. I do not ask you to accept anything I say without your own verification of all aspects of it.

S: *Maddy, I want to know how you know — give me your emperical [sic] evidence — we don't know? neither do you!*

I'm not saying you're wrong — but you have the audacity to tell these people ***they*** *are wrong?*

A: My name is Mrs. O'Hair, or Dr. O'Hair. I refuse to permit those outside of my family to address me by my given, or first, name. None of you here have my permission to address me in familiar terms. Thank you.

I must guess at the intent of the question since it is not stated with specificity. I apprehend that the empirical evidence required is for proof of "no god." By the word "empirical" you are presumably asking for verification proof or disproval proof to be offered either of which is based on observation or experience. The religious community has always used Aristotelian syllogistic argument to posit its god ideas, usually with the initial premise being an *a priori* statement. (That is, a presumption, held on faith.) In that system, used by all of you, there is only affirmative assertion and argument. One cannot prove a negative, nor is that demanded in your system of logic. Since the negative is not susceptible to proof, the person posing the positive assertion has the burden of maintaining the assertion; that is, he has the burden of proof. God is your invention. Prove that he exists. If you can do that, the Atheist will accept logical and reasonable proof. Meanwhile, no Atheist anywhere has ever seen god, felt god, heard god, conceived of god. We have never been presented any evidentiary documentation, physical experience, or logical proof that there is a god.

Our question to you is, simply: If you don't know if there is a god or not, why are you asserting that there is one?

I have the audacity to tell you all that you are in error if you insist on putting forward unsupported assertions. If you can't bring forward your proof, your empirical evidence of observation and experience, you should not be making your statements. And, you know that you do not have such proof.

I want this to be clear in your mind, so let me both repeat and give you an example. Suppose you would now say to me, "There is a hole ten feet in diameter in the middle of this floor." All I, as an Atheist, would ask is, "Where? I don't see any hole that I can empirically verify with the evidence of observation or experience. *Show me the hole.*" I do not need to go about proving that **you** do not perceive a hole. The hole that you see, which is not there, is your problem, not mine.

S: *You keep using the term "HELL" — as an Atheist — do you believe in heaven or hell?*

A: Hell is a nonsense term. Heaven is a nonsense term. I mean by nonsense that these are arbitrary words — or speech — symbols having nothing to do with reality.

There are usable "arbitrary words" in our cultures — the measurement of a "foot," the idea of a "minute" of time, but these at least have some practical use. The religious world invents terms and gives mean-

ings to their nonsense symbols which are peculiar to the belief set which glues the Christian system together. That is all make-believe. It has never been demonstrated to exist except in the imagination of sick minds.

I use the term "hell" in discussing with you the system in which you believe, the system which you accept as reality, deluded as you are. How else can we be in communication?

S: *Christians don't "buy" their way into heaven — they have the* ***choice*** *thru [sic] Jesus Christ who died for our lives — explain "buy."*

A: I am quite specific, deliberately so, in my use of words. What I said in this speech, as I have said in so many other similar ones, is that the system of morality of Christianity is despicable in that it substitutes the fear of hell or the reward of heaven as an inducement toward decent human behavior. The Atheist acts in an ethical way because that is logical. The Christian "buys," if one wants to use that term, his way into heaven with good deeds. Therefore, he does not really mean to be doing a good deed; he is really only making points with heaven. His goodness is not directed to the object of his alleged goodness, but rather toward his anticipated reward in heaven.

Further than that, I cannot permit your flat statement to stand that Christians have a choice through Jesus Christ "who died for our lives." You are saying that your love-filled Jesus Christ would permit you to rot in the torments of hell for eternity if you did **not** "accept him"? That is no choice at all there.

S: *Because I am religious and stick to my religious beliefs, I feel I have a moral attitude. Because you do not have a religion — are you moral? What are your morals. [sic]*

A: Atheists are not at all "moral." They are **ethical**. In fact, you may indeed call Atheists "amoral," which is to say by dictionary definition: "outside of the sphere to which 'moral' judgments apply." An ethical person conforms to a standard of conduct which has been reasonably devised. The moral person attaches a judgment of good or bad to conduct, usually based on the dictates of a religious idea. I covered, tonight, the source of Atheist ethics — which is reason based on the idea of "a reasonably prudent man" as outlined in American jurisprudence. I am sorry that you did not listen to what I had to say. I will not repeat it again now. (See page 20.)

Your adherence to morality couched in terms of religious absolutes can only bring to you feelings of anxiety and guilt. Those of us who are free of these feelings can look back on the system and understand it. Those of you who are still caught up in it cannot take an aloof, objective look at it.

Also, let me point out to you that what you call "morality" depends in great part on time and geography. What is considered to be good and moral in Iran today is not so considered in the United States. That is a matter of geography within a time era. Conversely, slavery was considered as acceptable in the southern United States up to 1865. That is a matter of different time eras in the same geography. In addition, we have many other examples. Torture was used universally in all countries against religious heretics. Torture is used today in fascist, militarist governments in Central and South America. Different time eras, culture, and value systems are involved.

Morality — and, of course, the better term is ethical living — came from the attempts of humankind to have decent relationships in the groups in which they found it necessary to live. It was not handed down from the heavens by god on two stone slabs; it arose out of human interaction. Its origin, basically, was in "coping" with life.

I also have with me tonight a short editorial by Jon Murray, Director of The American Atheist Center, which appeared in the February 1981 issue of the *American Atheist* magazine. To make the position of the organization clear, I will excerpt from it for you.

> One of the things of which Atheists are accused most often is being amoral or nonethical. In order to understand the charge a little better, let's look at what morals and ethics are. Morals refer to a set of generally accepted customs or conduct and correct living in a given society, usually as endorsed by the predominant religion of that society, *and to the practice of an individual within that society in relation to them*. The second part of this definition is the most important. We see that morals are rules that are laid before a young person, particularly at the time that the young person is coming into society. That individual has two major options with respect to those rules accepted: A) choose which one or all of the rules to follow; B) determine to what *degree* those selected should be followed.
>
> The person is then judged by others in the society on the basis of what rules were chosen to be followed and to what extent the person choosing follows them. Supposedly one who follows all the rules with 100% accommodation is the most "moral."

In the United States the rules which are laid down for this determination constitute a "morality quotient," but they are based upon Judeo-Christian teaching and history. The immediate problem for an Atheist is, then, that of being presented with a set of rules that may be **wholly** unacceptable, with judgment by the rest of society hinging upon adherence to them.

Since morality is then a subjective matter based on the cooperation level of the individual, it then follows that if an Atheist chooses a low level of cooperation he could be labeled amoral, or less moral than others. It does not bother me in the least that I do not have an acceptable morality quotient in relation to a Judeo-Christian standard.

Ethics is a different situation altogether. Ethics imply adherence to a high standard of honest and honorable dealings, particularly within the business world. Ethics most often refers to the methods used when dealing with others. As an Atheist, I consider myself to be most ethical. I am honest in my opinions and my method is one of straightforward confrontation of situations and ideas.

But morality, being subjective and on the level of percentage of individual compliance, must be discussed in terms only of a closed, usually a religious, system within a given society or social group. The person who complies with the Judeo-Christian rule-set can then be rated as having a high morality quotient.

But, let us take two examples: The Ayatollah Khomeini when judged by the Judeo-Christian rule-set receives a very low morality quotient. But, judged on the Muslim rule-set his morality quotient would be quite high. The U.S.S.R. gets a very low quotient when measured by the Judeo-Christian rule-set but a very high one when measured on the basis of materialism and Atheism. We are told that children in the U.S.S.R. do not laugh or play, that citizens live in poverty with no conveniences, and that brutalization of the populace is a norm so that escape from their rule-set is a high priority. In fact, the United States lauds and aids any possible "defector" from that system. We are told that since our rule-set allows the subjectivism implicit in the definition of Judeo-Christianity, that it is superior to the rule-set of the U.S.S.R. Nothing could be further from the truth. Yet on the basis of such assumptions our leaders stand ready to "nuke" the world in an effort to "free" the people of the "Communist countries" and bring them under the umbrella of our rule-set which we perceive as being superior.

The Judeo-Christian-based rule-set is not alone **not** superior to a rule-set based on materialism and Atheism, it is wholly unacceptable as a standard for the conduct of any animal, human or not. In addition, the Judeo-Christian rule-set has guilt as one of its built-in catalysts to foster a higher overall percentage of participation and adherence. Such an anxiety-producing incentive is not acceptable to an Atheist.

As an Atheist, I am basically anti-authoritarian and am — therefore — uninterested in following any rule-set that I cannot be allowed to establish myself rather than being handed one by default of being born into a particular society, against which I am to be measured. Atheism predicates a system of conduct based on *eclectic*, rational construction of one's own rule-set from all the information which can be gathered in respect to right conduct. Since most Atheists would pick sound, healthy goals, a nation composed of them would have almost elitist ethical standards. The rules of reason are much easier to follow as guidelines than those of an arbitrary authority, whether god or state.

If, however, I am to be bound by circumstances beyond my control, to fall within a rule-set not of my own construction, I will comply only as minimally as I am coerced so to do.

I want to point out to you one idea in my son's essay. He noted that if one person defects from the U.S.S.R. our nation gives that action much publicity and exalts that person. This is why one Atheist in a Christian nation is such a threat to the whole. We, as Atheists, have defected from your system. You must recapture us or kill us. Those are your standards.

S: *You say that Christianity and the worshiping of other gods should be sacred. You complain that the churches get "tax-free" things, but Atheist [sic] get nothing. And you say that we can worship our gods, but keep it to ourselves. Then* ***why*** *are you up there yelling your brains out about* ***your*** *religion? You say* ***we're*** *crazy? At least I know I didn't come from a monkey!*

A: It is not possible for me to comment on your immediate parentage. It is a wise child who knows his own father — monkey or not.

Your first comment is your interpretation of what I have said in respect to the worship of Christian and other gods. Where in the world did you get the idea that I said such an exercise was "sacred"? Disabuse yourself that I would say any such thing. What I have **repeatedly** said

here tonight is that religion is a *private* affair and is considered to be so by our Constitution which has provisions for keeping this private matter of religion from intruding itself into the political affairs of the state.

Neither Christianity nor the worship of any other gods is conceived by any Atheists anywhere to be a sacred activity; personal and idiotic — yes; public and sacred — no.

In regard to your characterization of my exercising my protected right of freedom of speech, I have just answered that question.

Your other comments, utterly unrelated to most, if not all, of what I presented here tonight, I simply ignore. Next question please.

S: *You say that you know who you are and where you are going, etc. . . . What's that? Doesn't it scare you to know you aren't going anywhere?*

A: Religious people use the word "going" in relation to death. I am presuming, therefore, that your question does deal with death. The problem is not the emotion which an Atheist may have in respect to the idea, or even the contemplation of death, but rather that religion has put such terror in you that **you** are very concerned with where you might be "going" and you want — at all costs — to avoid hell. This concern of yours, extrapolated into society, causes concern for us. All Atheists want to maintain life. But when that is finished, it is all over. There is nothing else. Therefore, you will find Atheists everywhere guarding life, taking care, planning so that they may have many years of life. And, we are always on the side of peace.

You may also be referring to your (*i.e.*, the Christian's) felt need to live in a closed and tightly ordered system which you hope is maintained beyond the grave. Any unanswered or unanswerable questions bother Christians. They must have a life provided with all of the answers, even if those answers are nonsense answers. You sound like an exceptionally fine candidate for military life.

S: *What are the annaul [sic] earnings/donation of your movement?*

A: I hate to call what I am doing "a movement." It always brings to mind the phrase "bowel movement." This is, rather, a cause organization.

The income of the American Atheist Center currently stands at about $400,000 a year.

Media people like to play this numbers game. We are always bad-

gered to reveal "How many members have you? How much income have you?" This has two underlying implications: 1) Atheists are in it for the money, and 2) effectiveness of an idea can be measured by monetary success. Neither of these contentions are true. If I happened to be the only person in the world who was an Atheist, just that figure of "one" would show that your god is not all powerful, because he could not convince me to join his ranks. If I had no income at all, that would not be significant to what I held rationally.

S: *Are you the Anti-Christ [sic]?*

A: Yes!

I hope you all appreciate the absurdity of that query. The Antichrist was mentioned in the New Testament, in the so-called Epistles of John, on four occasions.

The Christians, of course, as did Christ, thought that the end of the world was at hand at the time that their religion allegedly began. So in 1 John 2:18 we read, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that anti-christ shall come, even now are there many anti-christs; whereby we know that it is the last time."

Further in 1 John 2:22, this idea goes on, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is an anti-christ, that denieth the Father and the Son." From that statement it is obvious that even in that time, there were those who denied that "Jesus was the Christ" and also denied the father and the son.

The next reference is in 1 John 4:3, "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of anti-christ, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." This also reaffirms that there were those then who did not believe that J. C. had come in the flesh.

And the last is in 2 John 7, "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an anti-christ."

Taking the gospel for a source of teaching to you, there were many Antichrists in the beginning of Christianity; and there are now. I happen to be only one of millions in our day.

S: *Since you do not believe in Christianity, why did use [sic] reference to the story about Jesus on the mountainside to sway are [sic] decision about prayer in public schools.*

A: Well, of course, you have heard it said that the devil cites scriptures for his own purpose! And, so does the Antichrist.

I have already explained the need for my references to be in the field of your comprehension. (See pages 26-28 for Sermon on the Mount analysis.)

S: *What type of afterlife do you believe in or what do you believe happens after a person dies?*

A: After you die, your body decays — rots, if you will. When you have no viable brain you cease to be a unique individual.

Stop to think of something familiar to you. I am certain that you all have tape recorders and that you have often taped your favorite songs on an eight-track to put in your car. Suppose you accidentally throw that tape somewhere and it is burned up. Where did the song go? Was the song the soul of the tape? You see, without the material substance of that tape, there is no song which can be recorded upon it. And, so it is with your brain. (See pages 17-18.)

I'll have an "after" life in that I will live in the memories of my children and my grandchildren. My books will live for many years after I die so that my ideas will take on a life of themselves and continue, I hope, for some little while.

You will be interested in hearing what Albert Einstein (1879-1955) had to say about immortality:

> Immortality? There are two kinds. The first lives in the imagination of people, and is thus an illusion. There is a relative immortality which may conserve the memory of an individual for some generations. But there is only one true immortality, on a cosmic scale, and that is the immortality of the cosmos itself. There is no other.

S: *What do you think happens to your "self" when you die? Why?*

A: Your individual unique personality is housed in your brain, composed of your life experiences and your brain's capacity to gather data, analyze, and store it. When brain function ceases, you terminate. You no longer are, either in body or in "self." Any other notions are self-deceit.

S: *I have heard several advocates of the constitutional amendment for voluntary prayer speak of it as an amendment to support silent*

meditation and/or prayer. How can this be detrimental to any person of any faith, considering the value of quiet moments in any life?

A: First, let's look at the actual proposed constitutional amendment of President Reagan. Let me read it to you:

> Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit individual or group prayer in public schools or other public institutions. No person shall be required by the United States or by any State to participate in prayer.

Now, what is wrong with that?

First, the President says he is going to "restore" prayer to the public schools which had been "a widespread practice for 170 years," and second, that "a little prayer never hurt anyone." I will speak to the "restoration" first. We now have the survey which was taken in 1962. This shows that it was a common practice only in the Northeast and the South. More than 91 percent of the school systems in the West and 74 percent in the Midwest said that none of their schools conducted prayers in class. (The survey was done by Richard B. Dierenfield of Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota. His study was based on a 50 percent return of 4,000 questionnaires.)

As to the notion that "a little prayer never hurt anyone," it is the contention of American Atheists that to teach a child to reach for fantasy solutions to real-life problems is the worst possible training that any child can have for his outreach to adulthood.

There are other serious considerations. The President's amendment is an appeal for votes from the religious community. It is a crass, deliberate political move. He feels that if he appeals to the emotional issue of prayer in schools, the nation might forget unemployment, high interest rates, inflation, a flattened economy, unprecedented bankruptcies of large corporations, the assault which he makes against the social services, and his escalation of preparations for a nuclear war.

And, of course, his underlying hope is that the right of the United States Supreme Court to review legislation as to its constitutionality will be stripped from the court by this and subsequent amendments which will make each issue constitutional by encapsulating it in amendment form. This opens up a Pandora's box. If the United States Congress can propose and pass one amendment after another rather than take the careful analysis of the U.S. Supreme Court as to constitutionality, what comes next? Busing? Right-to-life? Funding of religious schools? Do we become a nation ruled by the passions of the majority? Are minorities to lose all of their rights?

All of that does not speak to the issue of prayer, either individual or group, being introduced into — let me read the exact words here — "public schools or other public institutions." What does he mean by that? Will prayer be required in public buildings and institutions? Shall each court start with a prayer? Will prisoners be required to pray over their food?

And, of course, the biggest fallacy is that "no person shall be required" to pray. If I, as an Atheist, must remain silent while you pray out loud, I am involved in your prayer, involuntarily. I may want to play the drums while you Christians pray, but you intend to deprive me of my right of speech, or of activity, so that you may be unperturbed and force me to participate in "your thing."

Please explain to me how a child, desirous of being accepted by his peer group in school, can possibly "opt out" of prayer which is sponsored, approved, conducted, endorsed, administered, orchestrated by the school authorities themselves, and yet be accepted by the peer group?

The many objections to this prayer amendment are immediately obvious.

But, I need to say more. Do you recognize the bias in your question? You ask me, "How can this be detrimental to any person of any faith . . ." when you know that I am here representing a group of persons who do not "have faith" in god ideas.

But, let me go to the question. No Atheist anywhere in the United States, nor I, nor the organization American Atheists, have ever stated or demanded or litigated that a student should be restrained from prayer or meditation in the public schools of our nation. If any child, in school, wants to pray or to meditate, all that child needs to do is to do it. No one will stop him or her.

What is at stake here is government-sponsored, government-administered, government-endorsed, government-financed prayer. The urgency of this indicates that those persons pushing for school prayer feel that this is the *only* place and the *only* time that most children will have where *they can be forced to pray in their day-to-day lives*. In the face of a Constitutional provision in the Bill of Rights which was interpreted by Thomas Jefferson, who wrote the Constitution, to mean that a wall of separation should be erected between state and church, the idea of a constitutional amendment to put prayer in schools is pushed although it is violative of that doctrine.

Just the mere reading of colonial history will inform you of the evils inherent in a coerced religion in government, much less in public

schools. No Constitutional amendment is needed to permit a child to choose to pray or to meditate anywhere at any time in class. But, safeguards of every kind are needed to keep religious zealots from forcing a commingling of religion and government in our public school system.

Further, Atheists feel that to instill into any child the basic irrational ideas of religion is a crime against humanity. Prayer should be prohibited not alone because it is unconstitutional in our country to commingle religion and government, but because the exercise of prayer is inherently insane.

S: *When you take prayers out of the school, aren't you forcing Athism [sic] on others!*

A: Free public education is furnished in the United States by government on the premise that we need a literate populace capable of dealing with today's world and of supporting itself in occupations. What is taught in the public schools is, and ought to be, the traditional three R's: "readin' — 'ritin' — 'rithmetic." Religion is a private matter for home and church instruction, especially since it is a subject of much contention between sects. The absence of religion in the curriculum of the public schools cannot be translated to mean that Atheism has been introduced "as a subject" in the same way that religion has been so introduced.

You see, what you fear is what you have done. The school subjects have been so deliberately saturated with religion by you, that you feel if any subject is taught without that religious saturation that there is a chance it can be permeated with Atheist "philosophy." Disabuse yourself that we have those designs. Pure math is pure math and it should stay that way. Atheists do not have your ethics.

It would take a separate effort to introduce Atheist-related subjects, such as the history of Atheism, the basic tenets of Atheism, the personalities — even the heroes — of Atheism, the need for Atheism, and so on. One day American Atheists will be making the effort to see that Atheism is, specifically, taught in our public schools. It's a good subject.

S: *Why do you insist on making fun of our religions, when* ***we*** *dont [sic] stand up as Christians and put Atheists down for their beliefs?*

A: But the answer is so obvious! Your beliefs are ludicrous. You can't really believe that the devil appeared and wafted Jesus onto a mountain

from which he could see the entire world and that the devil, personally, tempted Jesus by holding a long conversation with him? (Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:2-13) Or, do you think that god did "moon" Moses — that he shoved his bare butt at Moses? (Exodus 33:23, "And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.") Or, do you think that god farts mighty farts? (Isaiah 16:11, "Wherefore my bowels shall sound like a harp . . .") Or perhaps you plan to change your diet to suit your god. (Isaiah 36:12 and 2 Kings 18:27, ". . . Hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?") When you accept stories like that as "gospel," you know that people are going to laugh at you.

Au contraire, however, you can't laugh at Atheists because we don't adhere to (largely) irrational ideas. If you find any humorous slip in our logic, we will be the first to laugh **with** you at our own mistakes.

But, I'll tell you what **you** did with Atheists for about 1,500 years. You outlawed them from the universities or any teaching careers, besmirched their reputations, ostracized them, blacklisted them, banned or burned their books or their writings of any kind, drove them into exile, humiliated them, seized their properties, arrested them for blasphemy. You dehumanized them with beatings and exquisite torture; gouged out their eyes; slit their tongues; stretched, crushed, or broke their limbs; tore off their breasts if they were women; crushed their scrotums if they were men; imprisoned them; stabbed them; disembowled them; hung them; burnt them alive.

And you have nerve enough to complain to me that I laugh at you?

I'll tell you what I think that Atheists should do. You don't want us to laugh at you . . . so what we should do is to blacklist every professor in every college or university who is religious, then we should fire them, hound them out of town, ruin their reputations, destroy their writings, burn their books, persecute them for their ideas. We should do the same with every Christian we find in a high school, a junior high school, an elementary school, a kindergarten. With that for a good start we should root out all clergyman and beat and torture them, gouge out their eyes, slit their tongues, stretch their limbs until they pop out of the sockets, crush their scrotums, imprison them, stab them, hang them, burn them alive. Then, after we get done with the clergy, we should turn to each individual Christian and do the same.

You did that to every Atheist you could find for 1,500 years. Why should we not do it to you when we get into power? What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

I'll tell you why we would not do that even if we could — because we are decent human beings. We don't have the insanity of religion to guide us; we have the sweet light of reason. You have nothing to fear from us but our laughter. We had everything to fear from you, including the taking of our lives, because we would not join you in your mental aberrations and delusions.

We make fun of your ideas because that is a good educational technique. It makes you determined to prove that we are wrong. You will look up the quotation from your Bible about god showing his butt to Moses — and when you do you will find out that we are right and you are wrong, and you will have a little less respect for your god. It may even make you analyze your position. At least we hope so.

S: *What do you think of reincarnation?*

A: The word means to be possessed of flesh again. The only reincarnating anyone is going to go through is to be humus or fertilizer for the ground so that with the help of that small residual can spring new life. Of course, with the wrapping of human bodies in concrete catafalques, the soil is deprived of this enrichment, which is often all that any one person may have to offer to the earth in return for his or her existence.

S: *What is your explanation of your son finding Christ?*

A: I did not know that Christ was lost.

S: *If all you do is cut down people and their beliefs, how do you live in good conscience with your own beliefs when you seek to get rid of everyone else's?*

A: Here we go again, with the idea of "beliefs" and "belief systems." It is very obvious that you students here tonight cannot distinguish "belief" from fact and that you present and promote belief systems as fact(s). It is going to be necessary for you to learn to distinguish between the two and to have your "beliefs" cut down every time you inject them into the domain of facts.

If there are insane ideas in the world, it is everyone's duty to combat them. You, yourself, have the burden as a member of the human race to combat the idea of nuclear war, which is quite insane. We must stop the proliferation of nuclear devices and the threat of war. As you feel keenly about that, and I heard and saw your reactions tonight, so I feel keenly

that we must combat the insanity of religious ideas.

I attack only ideas, not people. However, if you persist in holding on to an insane idea, don't accuse me of attacking you personally. I am after that idea only. If you get in the way of the attack it is because you should not be in there tenaciously holding, for example, to the idea that women are inherently inferior, which is one tenet of your religion.

If you cannot take intellectual thrust and parry in respect to your belief system, don't complain to me. Equip yourself for the battle — if you can, but I seriously doubt that you can because the belief system which you hold is really intellectually untenable.

S: *If the majority of a public high school chooses to pray (have an announced prayer every morning), do you think it is right for that school district to refuse the students that right?*

A: If the majority of a public high school chooses to smoke marijuana (have an announced smoking session every morning), do you think it is right for the school district to refuse the students that right?

It is exactly the same situation. Something which is forbidden, *for good reason*, by the Constitution of the United States is forbidden. History amply demonstrates that the marriage of state and church has brought only harm to the entire human community in all ages of man. We got rid of that marriage in our country in 1789, and there is no reason to restore it now. "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." George Santayana (1863-1952).

In regard to free speech, the United States Supreme Court — and common sense — have always put certain restraints upon it. Perhaps one of the most simple explanations of this need for restraint that was ever uttered was given by the Supreme Court in one sentence: "Freedom of speech does not give one the right to yell 'Fire!' in a crowded theatre."

Our founding precepts cannot yield to the cry of the so-called religious majority which desires to impose its belief system on all. I would point out to you also, that the designation "religious majority" or "moral majority" is a misnomer. The religious in our nation are not in the majority now, nor have they ever been. At no time in the history of the nation, for example, have even 50% of our people attended church. This has been a matter of great concern to the religious community from before the time of the Revolution. (See pages 29-30 for U.S. Supreme Court ruling on majority claims.)

S: *Can you explain why your son became a Christian?*

A: I am here tonight representing Atheism and state/church separation. If you have questions for my son, save them until you can ask them of him.

S: *What do you think about your son becoming a Christian?*

A: My personal thoughts on the matter are my own. I do not put them out for public scrutiny.

As a general rule, it is not good for anyone in the public eye to insert their personal lives into the public arena. Since we speak for all Atheists, in public discussions or presentations we try to remain on the topic instead of on the personality.

S: *If you don't believe in God, why do keep [sic] offending yourself by fighting against an inaninate [sic] or unrealistic being, as you say he is?*

A: I spent some time this evening explaining to you that Atheists do **not** have "a belief system" of any kind, even a negative belief system. We do not have a series of "I do not believe in" statements which are the equivalent of your Christian "Thou shalt nots." You are very hung up on the idea of "belief" and this only bears out that which I contend: that you have been heavily programmed to the willy-nilly acceptance of "belief systems" of all kinds especially in religion and in politics.

The god idea, the Christian belief package, can be demonstrated as being harmful to individuals, to groups, to countries, to whole cultures, in all eras of the history of humankind. Nothing good has ever come out of religion. I am not fighting "a god" which does not exist, I am — rather — engaged in the effort of trying to free the human mind of some unnatural restrictions which have been placed upon it. There is currently on all of our television channels, a repeated public service announcement for the benefit of colleges for blacks, everywhere. People are asked to donate funds to any college for blacks wherever located. The phrase which is used is "A mind is a terrible thing to waste." I agree with that, although the phrase is grammatically inaccurate. The mind is not "a terrible thing." The proper grammatical statement should have been "It is terrible to waste a mind." In that theme, to permit the minds of the people of our nation, in our age, to be polluted with religion is a terrible misadventure of humankind.

The god you fear is quite real to you. I simply want to get the message

across to you that this god, which you incidentally refer to as "he," is — instead — quite unreal.

And before I leave this subject, please realize that I understand the basic "negative psychology" you have inexpertly attempted to use here. By telling me that I offend myself by fighting against an unreal being, you are led to delude yourself to think that I may abandon the fight. I am more offended that you thought I would fall for such a sophomoric attempt to delude.

S: *Are you saying Atheists don't have problems? Or know who they are at all times!*

A: It is beyond my ability to comprehend that anyone would ever, anywhere, under any circumstances, *not* know who they are. You may rest assured Atheists would never mistake themselves for agents of the lord, which is an enormous problem for you religious folk, who often feel that you talk for your invented god.

Atheists do *not* have problems about god, heaven, hell, prayer, souls, angels, demons, devils, life after death, sin, guilt, and so on. We are free *from* religion. And that is a big relief.

Atheists have *real* problems with real life which are tough enough without having a make-believe life full of the sadomasochism of religion superimposed on the real situation.

S: *How can you believe that the world and all of the universe was created without a supreme being?*

A: There is no evidence that it was "created," so logically we must assume that it was not.

In addition, of course, I read astronomy texts and those of astrophysics. It is a developing and interesting science and you should keep in touch with it. This is another area of expanding physical findings, primarily from space probes and more and more texts are available. Read them and learn.

S: *What do you hope to accomplish by coming here? God bless [the word bless is then stricken and changed to:] help your soul.*

A: If we present more about what Atheists think, instead of having religionists tell what they think we think, the emotional level of the hatred toward Atheists is reduced, thus making it a little easier for us to

— at least — survive. The Christians have ever been involved in attempts to limit that survival factor if not eliminate it. The reprisals against Atheists are now psychological and financial where before they had a physical element therein.

Also, I came here at the invitation of your Forum Committee to try to present to you the Atheist viewpoint. You came, obviously to hear, whether you agreed or disagreed, in whole or in part, with what you heard. Take away from this experience what you like. I came to educate. In that education, I do not pull punches or shy away from the blunt intent of my words.

S: *How much do you make a year with repect [sic] to your son?*

A: I don't "make money." Incidentally, only the Treasury Department's printing plant does that. I work full time on a volunteer basis for The American Atheist Center, that is — without salary. When there is a fee involved for my speaking, since I am an agent of The American Atheist Center, the money goes directly to The Center, not to me.

S: *Where in the Bible, does it say — as you did — "Don't pray in the synagogue"?*

A: (See pages 26-28.) Matthew, chapter six, verse five: "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues. . . ." And then, chapter six, verse six: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret."

S: *As a Christian individual, I don't limit my destiny as you have. I, too, know where I'm going, however, there's a difference. I am willing, and open-minded enough to change my destiny. It seems to me that you aren't. Therefore, do you feel that you're limiting your destiny? to [sic] me that qualifies you as being simple-minded, if you are.*

A: Some of these questions are difficult to decipher and I need to presume your intent, which is often not clear. Apparently you think that one's destiny is limited if it does not include the option of continuation of life after death. You say, I think, that you have not limited your destiny since this option is open to you. Then, however, you say you are willing to change your destiny. Am I to understand that you are willing to forego what you call your destiny of continuation of life after death? Or

is your so-called option one of heaven or hell in this so-called "after life"?

Actually, as a Christian you have limited your option very severely. You can only hope to have that continuation, wherever it may be. In fact, that is the only reason for your being alive — to reach toward the goal of a continuation of a life after death. Whereas I have hundreds of reasons for living. Perhaps, I have thousands of reasons. The most compelling one of these is that life, intrinsically, is good and worthwhile. That satisfies a reasonable person. I do not care to change my options for yours. I intend to live life fully, richly, totally, beautifully, here and now. That is worth doing. No matter what you do, you have one eye on heaven to see if "someone" is giving you points for doing it. I'm sorry that your life is so miserable that you would bet on another one being better.

Further, need I point out to you that a number of Christian denominations say that you have no option with your destiny, since whether you are bound for heaven or for hell is a matter of predestination and was decided by god before you were even born?

S: *How do you feel about your son's actions?*

A: I am being queried tonight about "my son" almost as if I were Mary and you thought that my only son was Jesus Christ. Incidentally, Mary had five other children. In not one question have you been able to identify this son. The only identity he has as a person is "the son of Madalyn O'Hair." And, that is sad.

When I came into this meeting room tonight I introduced you to several other people who had accompanied me. One was my son Jon Murray, Director of The American Atheist Center in Austin, Texas. The other was Robin Murray-O'Hair, my adoptive daughter and natural granddaughter, who is the editor of the *American Atheist* magazine. Both Jon and Robin are graduates of the University of Texas. I have another son, William J. Murray, who has recently been in the media.

How I feel about my family is a personal matter.

S: *How do you justify your actions toward him?*

A: Neither you nor anyone else in this room nor the media knows what "my actions toward" any of my family are. I have never publicly enunciated them. You rely entirely on what you have read, seen, or heard in the media as coming from that son who is not present here tonight.

That son, unlike the one here, may feel that he can broadcast family information, real or make-believe. I do not. Those are not my ethics and I will not respond to your queries.

S: *Do you still love him?*

A: My public life is my public life; my private life is my own. Your curiosity is not going to be satisfied by me.

S: *Where are you going?*

A: Home. It's been a long day and we have a long drive back to Austin tonight.

S: *Do people equate* ***you*** *with the Devil?*

A: Do you?

Has it not come to you how important the devil is in the Christian scheme? Your entire life is devoted to the process of being saved. From whom? Your entire fear of death is associated with being cast into a hell presided over by whom? In your scheme of salvation, without a devil there would be no need of a god.

I am always amazed that Christians slur and attack the basis of their belief system. How many of you have roundly damned Judas? He should be a Christian hero. Without his betrayal of J. C. there could never have been the drama upon which you base your religion.

Now, in your prayers tonight, you thank god for Judas and for the devil, else your devotion to this nonsensical scheme may go astraying.

S: *Many people call themselves Christians and are not. Many people* ***are*** *hypocrites. But how do you feel about someone who truly feels in his heart that Jesus is their [sic] savior and more importantly tries to be all that the Bible says that we should be and tries to be as unprejudiced as they [sic] can be?*

A: I am always surprised at how many persons are judgmental concerned with their own breed. Here you are calling other Christians, who do not measure up to your standards, hypocrites. They probably do the same for you. The Episcopalians feel they are superior to the Baptists. The Methodists look down on the Roman Catholics. The Presbyterians hold their noses in the air when confronted with a Mormon. It goes on unendingly.

Although you talk in terms of there being many kinds of Christians, or persons who call themselves Christians, it is necessary to understand not only your common factors, the history of your denominational squabbles, but also the core of the religion to which you all subscribe. There are many brands of Atheists as well. We have lesser hearts calling themselves agnostics, or humanists, secularists, or objectivists, free-thinkers, or rationalists. (See Appendix.) But we must also be judged by our overall position, over a period of history as well. And, our history as well as our position has been, is, and will be superior to yours or any other religion.

If you are going to be all that the Bible says that you should be, you are in trouble. Do you really think that you can drive demons out of another person by the laying on of hands? Remember that Mark 16:17 has Jesus himself saying, "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues;" Mark 16:18, "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." It would be dangerous to see your parent have a heart attack and instead of getting an ambulance and having that person transported to the hospital, you would lay on hands to drive out demons and thus to heal that parent.

You cannot be what the Bible says that you should be for it admonishes you, Matthew 10:22, "And, ye shall be hated of all men, for my name's sake." That's heavy stuff.

You can't even be unprejudiced. For your Jesus clearly states, Matthew 15:24, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Unless you are a Jew, you are not wanted in this religion.

For someone who really "truly feels in his heart that Jesus is his savior" I would recommend a psychiatrist. Specifically, I would recommend someone who has been trained in rational emotive psychotherapy. That is a new Atheist school of psychotherapists headed by Dr. Albert Ellis.

S: *Is it true that your son has refused your beliefs and accepted Christianity?*

A: Ask him, not me.

S: *If so, how to [sic] you feel about this?*

A: Again, my private life is my own.

S: *You seem to have a moral sense inherent in your views, egocenti-hypocracy [sic], etc. what [sic] would you say are the sources of this moral sense for you?*

A: I have an ethical sense, as distinguished from a moral one, which has come to me from my encounters with life and from a study of history as well as an extensive reading in psychology, sociology, ethics, law, philosophy, current events, and all of the hard sciences.

What I have is "inner direction," which is to say, reliance upon my own capacity for decision making. I do not need either the "outer direction" of the state or directives from god.

S: *What do you propose to be a social and personal source of moral values in the secular world?*

A: They are all around you. Lessons abound in everyday life, in your family, in this school, in your community, in our nation, internationally. We are all very aware of the long road we have taken through history. We repudiate slavery everywhere we see it today; we are appalled by it. The awareness of its heinous nature was pressed upon humankind for many centuries everywhere. But because slavery had Bible backing, it took many years to rid humankind of it.

There are other continuing ills in our culture. We are all aware of the impact of unemployment on our nation today. We see what happens in individual human lives as a result of it; that perception is open to anyone who looks around. We are not immune to the knowledge of all aspects of our culture. To be totally unethical one would need to be deaf, dumb, blind, and past feeling. Ethics is not some panacea medicine measured out of a mystic bottle by the spoonful to all; it does not lie hidden in esoteric writings. It is not an instant pill of understanding that we swallow. It comes not from some superior force. Ethics comes from our daily encounter with life and our adjustments to others of our ilk in the culture we have. Men and women, throughout the centuries of time, men and women just like you and me, were able to come to agreements as to mutual rights and accommodations. We hammered out ethics. God didn't.

Lessons for life are where you find them. It is your duty to recognize them and to sort them out. Don't be lazy. Everything comes by trial and error. Don't look for a specific conundrum as a remedy. Life is quite often hard, but it is worth the effort.

S: *In your opinion, what is the purpose of our (human beings) existence?*

A: We have a biological drive to 1) stay alive and 2) breed, and that is all. Any other goal is a goal we set, not one that is set for us by nature.

Therefore, we must make certain that the impositions of society are not so stringent that we cannot all engage in an activity which the founding fathers of our nation saw as attractive: "the pursuit of happiness."

Life is good. Relax and enjoy it.

S: *In your talk you said that what "we" are is something that you could deal with. By the way you mock it in your tone and speech mannerism, it seems like you are, in actuality, having a very hard time.*

A: Christians give everyone a hard time. When I have read the fabulous fables of Christians and lions facing one another in the colosseum my sympathy has always been with the lions. Other than that, I do not understand the intent of your remarks.

It is very difficult if not impossible for Atheists and theists to "dialogue" because we operate on different principles, have different value systems, different vocabularies, and as opposed to faith we utilize logic. This gives little basis for an exchange.

S: *Are Atheists so free of god that they can get away with bad words?*

A: Words are words. There are no bad or good ones. What would words have to do with the god idea? Your question is premised on the idea that god has designated certain words as "bad" and that appears to me to be yet another hindrance in communication between people. Why would your god, the source of everything and the fountain from which flows only good, invent words and then label them "bad"? (See pages 105-107.)

S: *Have you found happiness?*

A: Many times, many places, with many people and many things. Incidentally, happiness is a state of mind and one goes into or out of it. I rather presume that if one was euphorically happy all the time, that person would be mentally ill.

S: *What made you decide not to believe in God?*

A: I engage in the most seditious and dangerous activity in the world, all of the time! **I read.** I read constantly, indiscriminately, everything on which I can lay my hands. One has only to read the Bible in its entirety to experience intellectual repugnance of its entire contents. I did that and it brought me to Atheism.

The idea of god is irrational and I am a rational person. I needed to abandon my reason and accept god, or abandon god and accept reason. I chose the latter course.

S: *How do you know what actually happens to us after death?*

A: I have seen people, animals, trees, plants, even insects die. So have you. And, nothing "happens" except that the body decays. For at least 35,000 years of civilization people have watched other people die and in all that time there has been no evidence other than that death is final.

S: *No one know [sic] so how can you call Christian beliefs about life after deth [sic] absurd.*

A: I must dispute your statement. Everyone knows that death is final. It is evident all around you. The Christian belief in life after death is simply a refusal to face the obvious facts, plus a flight into fantasy. Instead of making the most of life here and now, you waste it in preparing for a future life. The Atheists know that they must seize the moment, for once it is gone it is not recoverable.

Religion has been sacrosanct for many years by force of law with fine, imprisonment, or death visited upon anyone not addressing religious ideas in sacrosanct terms. You are startled to hear me use ordinary speech in my references to religion, or to hear me josh religion, laugh at its sacred dogmas. The idea is shocking to you because it is now novel, but as more and more Atheists speak out, this will become an ordinary way of dealing with religion — which you must defend how you can on intellectual grounds now, but never again through force or coercion of state power.

S: *If you haven't been to church in 55 years, how can you base your judgment on what you thought as a 4th grader?*

A: As I indicated to you, after I had read the Bible one weekend and

discovered, to my dismay, what it was, this did not mean that I did not continue my education in respect to religion. I studied religion, its history, its philosophy, comparative religion, psychology of religion, both in undergraduate and graduate schools. I have observed religion in churches rather than attended there as a communicant.

From all of this I have discovered that I sure as hell was one smart little kid when I was in the fourth grade. I was as right then as I am right now. Everything I learned from that time forward only reinforced what I intuitively felt that weekend when I read the Bible from cover to cover.

S: *Do you feel that the United States government should accord full diplomatic protocol to a visiting Pope?*

A: No. I was ashamed during the visit of the Pope to the United States that our government officials fawned over this medievalist the way that it did.

As you know, American Atheists, my family, and I, as taxpayers, attempted to have a prohibition put against his delivering a mass on the Washington Mall.

In fact, my son Jon created quite a stir in Chicago when, on one radio program, he characterized the Pope, the "pimp of peace," rather than a peacemaker. The thrust of the remark was that the Pope was really sending out his flock of priests to whore after an alleged peace while he raked in the money from the mockery.

Of course, we all realized that the politicians were courting Roman Catholic votes as they fell over one another in order to kiss his hand. *That* was real hypocrisy.

He should have been extended the same kind of recognition that our government extended to heads of states which we did not recognize for scores of years — nothing at all. His religious domain is not recognized either by our government or by the United Nations as a nation. Only Mussolini, in Italy, fell for that gaff.

S: *Did you establish your movement to fight religions or to impose social reform?*

A: The primary interest of the organization American Atheists is to establish the civil libertarian rights of Atheists, to see that there is no discrimination of any kind imposed on them for their opinions in respect to religion. It is a "freedom of conscience" fight.

The organization American Atheists is not legally constituted so that

it can "impose social reform" on any group or person. It is merely a privately organized and privately funded educational outreach.

I have here in my handy-dandy little kit a copy of the corporate aims and purposes of American Atheists. I'll read that to you. It is short, too.

American Atheists are organized:

(1) to stimulate and promote freedom of thought and inquiry concerning religous beliefs, creeds, dogmas, tenets, rituals, and practices;

(2) to collect and disseminate information, data, and literature on all religions and promote a more thorough understanding of them, their origins, and their histories;

(3) to advocate, labor for, and promote in all lawful ways the complete and absolute separation of state and church;

(4) to advocate, labor for, and promote in all lawful ways the establishment and maintenance of a thoroughly secular system of education available to all;

(5) to encourage the development and public acceptance of a human ethical system stressing the mutual sympathy, understanding, and interdependence of all people and the corresponding responsibility of each individual in relation to society;

(6) to develop and propagate a social philosophy in which the central figure is man, who alone must be the source of strength, progress, and ideals for the well-being and happiness of humanity;

(7) to promote the study of the arts and sciences and of all problems affecting the maintenance, perpetuation, and enrichment of human (and other) life;

(8) to engage in such social, educational, legal, and cultural activity as will be useful and beneficial to members of American Atheists and to society as a whole.

There are several definitions which we give along with that. They are:

(1) Atheism is the *Weltanschauung* (comprehensive conception of the world and of total human life value system) of persons who are *free* from theism — *i.e., free from religion.* It is predicated on ancient Greek Materialism.

(2) American Atheism may be defined as the mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason and aims at establishing a life style and ethical outlook verifiable by experience and the scientific method, independent of all arbitrary assumptions of creeds.

(3) Materialism declares that the cosmos is devoid of imma-

nent conscious purpose; that it is governed by its own inherent, immutable, and impersonal laws; that there is no supernatural interference in human life; that man — finding his resources within himself — can and must create his own destiny. Materialism restores to man his dignity and his intellectual integrity. It teaches that we must prize our life on earth and strive always to improve it. It holds that man is capable of creating a social system based on reason and justice. Materialism's "faith" is in man and man's ability to transform the world culture by his own efforts. This is a commitment which is, in every essence, life asserting. It considers the struggle for progress as an ethical obligation and impossible without noble ideas that inspire man to struggle and bold creative works. Materialism holds that humankind's potential for good and for an outreach to more fulfilling cultural development is, for all practical purposes, unlimited.

S: *If it is not for social reform, what other issues do you address?*

A: Under the cognomen of American Atheists, we address — formally — only the issues of state/church separation and the civil rights of Atheists. As human beings and citizens of the United States and the world, we are interested in a great number of other social issues. Insofar as they are impinged upon by the state/church separation issue, our organization takes a formal position on them all. Some of these issues are the "right to life" — and we mean by that the right of people to remain alive in a world free from nuclear war; the right to an education free from religion; the right to information concerned with human sexuality unrestricted by religious dogmatic views; the right to read, to write, or to speak freely and openly. Many of the most basic rights of humankind we find are posited in the Atheist position of the right to *freedom of the mind.*

One hears a lot about women's rights, or gays' rights, or kids' rights, or economic rights, or political rights, or union rights, or black rights. They are all peripheral to the central right — the main one: freedom of the mind. Without that freedom, all else is fragmental.

We have often gone to these other groups and asked them to form a coalition with us for one purpose only: to fight for free speech. That all these groups are using direct mail or pamphleteering in our day and age is incredible. We must form a large coalition to demand time for all minority viewpoints on the electronic media. Until we do that, we cannot succeed in educating the people of the United States.

They, of course, cannot take such a suggestion or outreach from Atheists.

S: *How do you explain your son being a born again Christian, if he was brought up as atheist [sic] during his emotional years?*

A: Oh dear, I suppose the repeated questions concerned with my son — and *again*, you don't even know his name — are to wear me down. But, I don't wear down.

Neither of my sons were "brought up as Atheists." I was the only Atheist in the family and I did not feel, at that "child rearing" time, that I should protect my children with a shield of Atheism around them. I was in error then; I know better today.

I was corrected in my attitude by an Atheist housewife from Detroit. She was right and I was wrong, so I changed my opinion because of the force of her logic. She said to me, "If you were reared in a home where there was extreme male chauvinism and you had to fight to get rid of that, taking maybe a decade to do it . . . and then you had a child, would you deliberately permit that child to be entrapped in that male chauvinism again? Don't we learn in one generation precious lessons, dearly bought, which we must pass on to the next generation? What is civilization for if it is not to pass on the knowledge of often bitter experience?" She was right. I have already given this illustration. (See pages 77-79.)

My granddaughter was therefore deliberately reared as an Atheist. I think that all children should be. The mental aberrations of religion should be kept from the developing mind of a child.

S: *You say Jesus didn't exsist [sic], But [sic] we have written documents. We didn't see Napleon [sic], however, but we believe he exsisted [sic].*

A: No. You do not have written documents from the time of Jesus. One of the surprising contentions is that here is a god who created the entire universe, watches even the little sparrow which falls, has ears enough to hear every prayer directed to him (her, it) from earth, and yet could not keep a record of "his" only begotten son whom "he" had sent to redeem the world. There is not a scrap, not a fragment, not a sentence, not a phrase anywhere in secular history or even in religious history concerned with Jesus Christ until a hundred years after his alleged appearance.

With Napoleon, as with every other historical person, we have con-

temporary records of their times. And — incidentally — we don't "believe" that Napoleon and Lincoln and Caesar existed; their existence is demonstrated by those records.

Even if there were no records, only sagas or epics or heroic poems concerned with great men, we would use critical tests on these pseudo-histories and sort out the fabulous, the make-believe, from the reality. This can and is being done.

S: *If churches I.E. [sic] Catholics have misused their funds . . . How do you explain their missions, service projects, self-help programs ETC [sic]. If you have a better idea . . . what is it?*

A: First, my better idea: All social welfare programs should be carried out by the collective community and humankind and funded with tax dollars. The programs should be administered and staffed by competent social welfare workers trained in the specialties needed. They should never be administered or staffed by religious zealots. Also, the services should be open to all without any religious reference but based solely upon the type of social program required. They should not be tainted by being located in churches or on religious property. The churches have done so much harm in these areas of concern of all humankind by using the social programs, usually tax financed, as vehicles for proselytizing specific religious ideologies. The famous, or I should say infamous, Head Start program was one such which was seized upon by the churches to convert small children in their care. Overseas, the Roman Catholic Church's "Caritas" mission is notorious for distributing excess dairy, grain, and meat products of our nation, purchased by our government from our farmers, as recruiting snares for hungry peasants. The religious hospitals are financed by Hill-Burton Act funds and yet their charges, as private hospitals, are excessive.

Although the churches, not alone the Roman Catholic but all churches, often brag about their service projects, it is interesting that the United States government has determined that not more than a usual 2% to 3%, and often less, of the incomes of the churches go toward this end and that the assistance given is always sectarian. For example: The Roman Catholic Church is never going to open up a Jewish home for the aged Jews. You will never see the Baptists with a marriage counseling service for the Mormons. Incidentally, the Mormons show the highest percentage for "welfare care," 7%, but there is a factor of indentured service that throws suspicion upon this figure.

As for missionary work, it is regrettable that any church is permitted

to exercise this act of intolerance, wherein it issues itinerant preachers to other countries to insult the gods there and to turn the people away from their current worship in order to embrace Christianity. Christians would not permit the Muslims to come to the United States as missionaries to try to turn this nation away from their Jesus Christ and toward Allah and Mohammed, his only prophet. Don't you remember your history and the Crusades which were launched against the heathen Turk? All in all, this is a despicable exercise of humankind and should be stopped, NOW.

S: *Why do you focus on Ronald Reagan? Did you feel so violently opposed to Carter, Ford? Reagan didn't begin most of these programs — he only carries them out.*

A: We are not under the administration of either Carter or Ford. It would be ludicrous for me to oppose them since they are not in positions of power. When Carter was in office, in respect to state/church separation problems, I (as a spokesperson for American Atheists) opposed him vigorously (which is the correct word — not violently). When Ford was in office, in respect to state/church separation problems, we also opposed him vigorously. Reagan's position on all religious issues are violative of the premises upon which our nation is founded. He has vowed to uphold the Constitution of the United States and he has instead attacked it. The man is a dangerous menace to our nation and to the world.

S: *Where are the churches putting the fifty billion dollars? Are they not your vihiche [sic] to India, Africa, and all those Slums [sic]?*

A: Your question, of course, concerns my statement that the churches of the United States have an income each year, right now, of approximately $50 billion.

The churches use a lot of the money which they receive to play the stock market and to buy into ownership of businesses in the United States. There have been a number of attempts to have the churches disclose how the money is spent. The churches vigorously object to this disclosure. Thus, they are suspect even to their communicants and friends.

I am not certain of what the second part of your question is, but not all of India and Africa consists of slums. The economic aid received in those countries is usually from the largess of the developed countries,

not alone the United States but the European nations, the Soviet Union, China, Canada, Australia, and so on. This is most often aid from the governments of the giving nations. Private aid given by churches or church groups amounts to no more than two or three percent of the total.

S: *Everyone pays taxes. If they decide to send their children to a parochial school then shouldn't that school get the benefit of the taxes paid by the parents?*

A: Your tax dollars are put into a tax dollar pool for the general support of all our institutions. They — generally speaking — are not "designated taxes." I hedge a little there, for we all know that license plate fees go to road repairs in many states and that sales taxes in some states go to support schools, as do *ad valorem* taxes (on real estate). But, generally speaking, your federal income taxes are undesignated as to use. The situation of all taxpayers is that some government services and activities which are supported by their tax funds are those of "the general welfare" and not direct services back to the benefit of the specific taxpayer. A taxpayer who does not own a car cannot demand that his tax money *not* be spent on roadways. Many people have no children at all and the aged generally have no children in school. They cannot demand that the schools be closed or that their taxes not be used to support them. A very large percentage of people in the United States are in opposition to the expanding nuclear armament program of our more irrational leaders (such as Reagan and Casper Weinberger, Secretary of Defense and the Pentagon brass). Those people, and most Atheists are included in them, would like to stop the government from using their tax money for those purposes. That is a most difficult task, to fight for "non-designation" even on the vast scale of opposition to war.

But, specifically as to your question, universal free public education was decided upon by our forefathers as a desirable goal over two hundred years ago. History bears out that the decision was a good one. If any parents opt out of that system because they desire the extra ingredient of religion to be a part of their children's educational formula, the burden of providing that extra ingredient — which is not desired by all — is necessarily upon them. If I decided that in addition to the programs in a public school, I wanted my granddaughter to have ballet classes, I can hardly ask the general taxpayer to pay the burden of the lessons.

A good, basic, standard education is needed by all and that is all that the taxpayer should be asked to finance.

However, we Atheists have another objection to paying for your religious schools and that is, by and large, what is taught in religious schools is collective insanity. Religious schools do not teach children, they indoctrinate human organisms until they are automatons. That's quite a difference.

S: *You seem to believe in Hell, I don't see how you can't believe in heaven.*

A: I am always fascinated by the conclusions to which students come. Nowhere in my address tonight did I indicate at any time that I "believe in" hell, nor did I intimate the same. One can hardly "believe in" something that does not exist. Please disabuse yourself that either heaven or hell has any meaning to me.

S: *You spoke of religious people having feelings of personal inadequacy and saw this as a disease. I am glad that I have the disease.*

A: It takes all kinds. I would that you were self-sufficient, independent, and able to stand on your own intellectual feet. You demonstrate instead that you are conditioned. You love your dependency and inadequacy, your guilt and your anxiety. You love to be abused. It is constantly amazing to me that religion has the power to distort one's self-interest.

S: *Who are you to say that I have feelings of "inadequacy" before God and practically all other things? You have not even had the experience of being before God. Also your statement about young people being messed up by religion is wrong. I am a freshmen [sic] in highschool [sic] and I am quite sattisfied [sic].*

A: I cannot conceive of what you mean by the expression "being before God." Therefore, I cannot make a reply to that.

Also, I don't know if you mean that you are satisfied to be a freshman in high school or if you are satisfied with your god ideas.

I will consider this to be a comment and not a question which needs reply.

I can speak as to "who I am" to say that Christians have feelings of inadequacy. I can, of course, not know what goes on in your individual

head except from what is reflected in your actions, or in this specific case, your question. But, I can and do know the tenets of the religion which you accept and use as a personal guide. One of the precepts upon which you base your life is that predicated by Jesus Christ himself whereof he said (Luke 14:26), "*If any man come to me, and hate not* his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and *his own life* also, *he cannot be my disciple.*" If you need to hate yourself to love Christ, you have feelings of inadequacy.

S: *You compare the Pope to Hitler. Nevertheless Pope John Paul has roundly condemned the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and political oppression in all its forms. Is this fair?*

A: I rarely discuss Hitler and never compare anyone to him. What I said about the Pope is that he is a medievalist who would drag the culture of the world back at least three hundred years if he had the power to do so.

Pope John Paul has never lifted his voice against the proliferation of nuclear weapons except in generalized statements which are thus meaningless since they are couched in overbroad terms and directed nowhere. If Pope John Paul really wanted to bring his enormous power to bear, he could warn the Roman Catholic population of the world today, not tomorrow, but today, that any Roman Catholic anywhere in the world assisting in the design, production, or financing of nuclear weapons must stop that activity immediately or be in a condition of mortal sin. He could deprive them of the sacraments. He could refuse them entry into the church doors, or the Roman Catholic heaven.

He does not do this — and this is a weapon he could effectively use. He could stop the nuclear arms race tomorrow. But he is really more concerned about the souls he can get into heaven and the warm wallets he can get into the church doors than he cares about the earth and all the life upon it. This man, through his inaction, commits a crime against the human race.

We are fortunate here in Texas to have one bishop in Amarillo who is a better man than his Pope. He has advised those who are working on the neutron bombs at Pantex that they must either quit this death dealing industry or be in mortal sin. I love him! He's probably an Atheist at heart.

And, yes, this is a fair comment concerned with your criminal Pope.

S: *Why do you resort so often to name calling? Is this such a good defense for an atheist?*

A: I doubt that you are concerned with the efficacy of my "defense."

You do not listen with a discerning ear. What I have said here tonight over and over again is that certain ideas are inherently insane. Since you make a deliberate choice to hold those ideas, you feel that my remarks are directed to you personally. One cannot individualize remarks in an exchange such as this. One must be able to sort out the ideas, have them stand alone, and examine them. I can't help *you* in relation to what you are doing except to point out to you that you are doing it.

S: *By denying the church publicly [sic] aren't you denying their [sic] Rights [sic]?*

A: There was no mention of church publicity in my discussion tonight. However, my opinion is that any entity which wants to publicize should pay the going commercial rate to do so. There should not be any special price rates for churches.

Further, to permit the churches to have "public service time" for advertising on television or radio is hardly a public service. Such advertising does the public a *dis*service. The Surgeon General of the United States should require each church to place a disclaimer on its advertising: "Beware! What religion offers may be hazardous to your mental health." If the government can require this of the tobacconist, it can do the same for religion.

On the other hand, if your question asks, "By denying the churches publicly, aren't you denying their rights?", then my reply is, "No, I am severely criticizing the churches, but I have no power to deny any church its rights."

S: *Ms. O'hair [sic], You've told us all of the evils of the status quo, I wonder, is there any good in the country?*

A: Please, do not address me as "Ms." The abbreviation "ms." stands for "manuscript." I do not use it at all.

I think that I have spoken tonight — with reverence, if you will excuse the use of that word, but it is one that you will thus understand — I speak with reverence of our Constitution, the ideas of the founding fathers, the very important principle of equal justice before the law, universal free education, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of conscience, all of which are protected in our nation. I have discussed the need of individual sustained participation in civic affairs.

During the 1960s, when the war in Vietnam was under heavy criti-

cism, a great number of Americans mounted bumper stickers on their cars which read, "America: love it or leave it." Your question has that tone tonight. There is no realization in the question or the slogan that there are imbalances, evils, inequities, inequalities in our land and that they need to be corrected so that we can have an even better country. The criticism which I have given is constructive. You view it as destructive because you are fearful of moving away from the known. I am not. Experiment and change most often are for the better, not the worse. I give you the counter slogan which was developed in the 1960s also: "America: love it enough to help it change."

S: *Do you believe that a person can separate what he or she does from what he or she believes? Would you explain why a person could or could not do this?*

A: Certainly a normal person effectuates in life's activities those underlying principles upon which that person's life is based. One can, however, do otherwise out of a sense of fear, or guilt, or to reduce an anxiety situation, or out of perfidy. For example, I know a number of Atheists who pretend to their parents that they are still religious, especially when around the parents, so that they do not distress their parents — especially if the parents are strongly religious. Often this can be a kind gesture. But, there are different motivations, also. When the conduct becomes bizarre, the psychiatrist labels the behavior schizophrenia.

What I am saying is that the kind of conduct you describe can and does happen, in varying degrees for a multiplicity of reasons. What did that Shakespeare character say,

This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night and day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

from *Hamlet I, iii, 75.*

Of course, the person who uttered the phrase was guilty of gross dissembling, as I recall it.

Professional persons are called upon constantly to separate what they do from what they "believe." A judge, a congressman, a doctor, is often called upon, in professional capacity, to handle something reflecting an "opinion base" in opposition to that personally held.

S: *You said in your opening remarks that Atheists don't believe in*

abortions. Now you say that Atheists have no beliefs. Explain that.

A: I attempt to use words specifically. Please go back over your notes, or your memory. What I said is that Atheists do not accept abortion *as a primary means of birth control.* Do not get stuck on the word "belief." I exhort you to look it up in your dictionary. It does not mean what you think it means and I have already spoken to that tonight.

My son and I, when we started to explain this concept of the rejection of "belief systems," would sometimes catch ourselves wanting to use the word "belief." We need to be careful in public speaking to use the phrase, "We accept that . . ." or "Our opinion is . . ." instead. It was very difficult to do this at first because we, too, are products of the same acculturation process as are you and our culture is saturated with these non-think religious terms.

S: *What is the rationale behind your current court case to remove religion courses from the curriculum at University of Texas?*

A: The fact situation is compelling. One pays tuition for a three-hour course to the university, but one takes the course in religion from ministers in their churches, or in the case of Jews, rabbis in their synagogues. Fifteen hours of university credit may be compiled in this manner. The courses are not supervised by the university as to content. The teachers are not required to have the same academic credits that someone teaching at the University of Texas may have. The classes are quite sectarian, with a Baptist or a Roman Catholic or a Jewish bias. The student then receives credit for these courses equivalent to courses taught in the university proper. We think that this is an entanglement of religion and government, a fostering of religion and a giving of preference to one religion over another since smaller churches are not given the same access as established churches are.

In addition, we have never attacked the study **about** religion when it is taught from an unbiased secular standpoint. We have, indeed, suggested that the study *about* religion should be a compulsory subject beginning in the junior high schools of our public educational system. There should be a comparative religion course, history of religion, critical analysis of the Bible, an in-depth study of religious wars, religious crusades, the Inquisition, the detrimental impact of religion on all nations in all eras of man. We even propose a course which we have titled, "The Psychopathology of Religion."

S: *What about the church's role as welfare agency?*

A: I am unaware that they really have any. This — incidentally — is an area in which I have expertise. For 17 years I worked in the field of psychiatric social work and law. I am very educated, through both formal education and experience with so-called "welfare agencies" of churches and their funding sources, which are primarily governmental. In recent years, especially, the United States government has furnished most of the funds for religious welfare work and the administrators who are in those welfare agencies have received government funded salaries. This has developed into an open scandal and jostling of one religious agency by another in order to obtain more of the government largess. Most often the agencies are sectarian in thrust and employ persons with specific denominational beliefs.

Again, I would like to emphasize that this is an improper way to proceed. All welfare institutions should be non-denominational — in fact, secular — and should be staffed only with persons educated to the skills needed. These staff, or "need administering persons, would certainly not be clergy or those qualified by religious belief alone.

S: *How do you explan [sic] the "protected status" that Israel has enjoyed throughout its history if they [sic] are not the chosen people?*

A: But surely you jest! For example, of the twelve alleged tribes of Israel, ten have been completely and irretrievably lost for good and all times for over 2,000 years.

Of course, we Atheists see the legendary "twelve tribes" as a mythological story, to begin. The Jews came late in human history to the area now designated as Israel and that area was rent with wars after the Jews occupied it by force. They fell upon a peaceful citizenry there and slew them in order to steal their lands. Don't you read the Bible? Let me read what the Jews did when they first came to this land. It is in Numbers 31:6-18. Remember that the people then occupying Israel were simply living where they had lived for thousands of years; they had done the Jews no harm at all. And, suddenly, the Jews swept over their land.

> And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of *every* tribe, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand.
>
> And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses; and they slew all the males.
>
> And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that

were slain: *namely*, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian; Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.

And the children of Israel took *all* the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, all their goods.

And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire.

And they took all the spoil, and all of the prey, *both* of men and of beasts.

And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab, which *are* by Jordan *near* Jericho.

And Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation went forth to meet them without the camp.

And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, *with* the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle.

And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive?

Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.

Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him.

But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.

The Jews never had any right to this land now called Israel. The land was rent with wars after the Jews occupied it, which was for a relatively short time span only. They were driven out of Jerusalem for good and all times in the year 70 and never returned until after the Second World War! That is a mere 1,875 years! The Jews have never enjoyed a "protected status."

Insofar as their being the chosen people, I like the little jingle that says it all:

How odd
Of God;
To choose
The Jews!

This was a barbarous, blood-thirsty tribe made up of thousands of

Begins. The so-called "purity" of the Jews is laughable when we see the capture of all female children so that they may satisfy the lust of the Jewish warrior and add half-breed children to the tribe.

The Jewish religion is probably the most insane of them all. The Jewish god is the most ruthless, sadistic monster ever invented. That anyone at any time accepted or believed in the Old Testament is an irradicable taint against those who did.

S: *You say that you have no belief systems. Would you say that all atheists are nihilists?*

A: You are really having a hard time with the idea that Atheists do not need a belief system to guide them in their lives. It is a question that is constantly being repeated.

For those of you who do not know what nihilism is — *at this time*, it is allegedly a viewpoint that traditional values and beliefs are unfounded and that existence is senseless and useless.

Of course, nihilism was a phenomenon which appeared in Russia in the 1860s. The name was coined by a novelist in that country, Ivan Sergeyevich Turgueniev — Turgenev in its English spelling — (1818-1883) in his celebrated novel, *Fathers and Sons*, which was published in 1862. A group of radical revolutionary young persons maintained their activity, which was characterized popularly then as "nihilism," from a little before that time until about 1888 with the greatest activity being in the six-and-a-half-year period of July, 1881 to January, 1888. The movement was much more substantive than the word "nihilism," which its current meaning proposes. Incidentally, the word *nihil* in Latin is to be translated literally as "nothing."

The Atheist, who exalts in life, hardly finds existence to be either senseless or useless and therefore rejects ***the current idea*** of nihilism. In fact, in the face of this definition we point out that **all you have** is existence, so why not see to it that you have a good, well-rounded, filled and fulfilled life? *In respect to the modern use of this term,* Atheists are *not* nihilistic at all.

S: *You say it is unconstitutional for school prayer, that may be true but in the Declaration of Independence we are a country with the belief in one supreme god. So it is unamerican [sic]?*

A: The Declaration of Independence speaks to nature and nature's god — not to Jesus Christ or Christianity. Let me find this in my

Deists, *not Christians*. One of the exercises of today's clergy is to point to words such as "nature and nature's God" or "divine Providence" and claim that the use of these terms indicates that the founding fathers were Christian. Since, in the history which is being taught, there is not a specific distinction made, many of you accept this deceit. Your question indicates that you have. It is important to you to look up the theories and ideas of Deism. I can give them only briefly to you tonight.

Deism was the system of thought that advocated a natural religion, *divorced from the rejected Judeo-Christian Bible*, based on reason rather than revelation, emphasizing nature's harmony and intelligibility, and repudiating the idea that the supposed creator could interfere with the laws of nature and the matters of mankind on earth. Simply put, the founding fathers of our nation believed in "nature and nature's god" and they said so in the Declaration of Independence. Among those who disapproved of Judeo-Christianity and the Bible upon which it is based were Colonel Ethan Allen, Thomas Paine, George Mason, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and John Quincy Adams.

S: *What is your granddaughter's view of religion?*

A: She is here tonight. Robin, won't you please stand up and sing out. A student here needs your answer to this question.

Robin Murray-O'Hair: Oh, it's poppycock. It has the same amount of relevance to life as Grimm's fairy tales.

S: *What is your opinion on the structure and origin of the universe?*

A: What opinion I have is immaterial. The facts speak for themselves.

We have no idea what we mean when we use the word "universe." That is, as yet, undefined. As to any possible "origin," the theories are still in a state of flux. It is only when all the facts are in that we can hope to have a beginning understanding, rather than an opinion, of what the universe may be or what its structure has been, is now, or will be or become. (See pages 30-31, 36-38.)

S: *You're saying you don't believe in life after death, so you want to do all you can to live a long life now. What about others who begin to believe as you do that there is no life after death and so they decide to live life for themselves, to hell with the others! What is to keep them*

from making the world hell, because there is nothing to say it is morally wrong to do so? No fear of going to hell?

A: You are proposing that religion is a deterrent to crime and "immorality," or sin.

We have some examples of what happens when entire nations are Atheistic and when entire nations are theistic. History has provided an ample view of religion in power and the "hell on earth" which religions created everywhere, in all lands. Today, we see the joys of religion in Ireland, in the Philippines, in Iran, and certainly in all of the Muslim countries. Counterposed to that is China, Cuba, the Soviet Union, and Albania — and all officially Atheist nations. The people of these countries lead ethical lives, guided by reason, striving for better education and better ways of life for their people. Many European nations are abandoning religion, particularly the Scandinavian countries. If I am not mistaken, their crime rates are far below ours, not even half so great. Their educational standards are higher. They emphasize science to a greater extent. They have a keener understanding of the relationship values of human life. Women are closer to equality with men. Health care is provided by the state. Prenatal care is better and infant mortality is down. The unemployment rates are very low. Resort care ("R&R," *i.e.*, rest and recreation) is provided to their populace and retirement pension costs are borne by the state. Japan is largely Atheistic and by no stretch of the imagination can one propose that this is a non-ethical country.

It is not demonstrated either in the individual lives of Atheists scattered in religious lands or the collective groups of Atheists in countries formally Atheistic that there is a debasement of human life, a move into debauchery, or a callous disregard of others and their rights. To the contrary, there appears to be a greater concern for all humankind, for the ecology of those nations, for animals, for flora and fauna, all of which is based on reason. They understand exactly what John Donne (English poet, 1572-1631) meant when he wrote:

> No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee [from *Devotions, XVII*].

Anything to the contrary is religious propaganda to keep your reason enchained and to have you believe that you cannot do without your mental enslaver — Judeo-Christianity.

It is the Christian who has the most base reason for "moral" conduct. In a continuing human drama we see mass murderers, rapists, those who commit the most heinous crimes against humankind, all call upon "their savior" to forgive them at the last moment, and because "they accept Jesus Christ" we can all see their expectation of gaining entry to heaven. Atheists bear not alone the responsibilities of their actions but also the consequences of them. Christians can and do slough this off by the mere uttering of the words "oh, father forgive me." By the "acceptance" of an imaginary Jesus Christ "as their personal savior," they attempt to save their own skins, giving no thought to restitution for the damages they may have caused to others or to society. This is so despicable that I shudder when I think of it.

S: *If atheism is the answer against war, why does* ***atheistic*** *Russia keep exporting war? (Like Afgahnistan [sic], Poland, Czechoslovakia.)*

A: First, let me correct your reference. The name "Russia" applied to the country ruled by the czars prior to the revolution a little over 50 years ago. The name of the country since that revolution is the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, commonly — the U.S.S.R. or the Soviet Union.

At all times, The American Atheist Center attempts to keep even with events, to be knowledgeable about political and other situations throughout the world. I am unaware that the Soviet Union exports war. The government of Afghanistan, as an independent nation, asked for Soviet troops to assist it to put down a reactionary Muslim coup in that nation (probably C.I.A. inspired and financed). Poland, another independent nation, has *not* asked for Soviet help nor is it receiving any. The U.S.S.R. did not place troops in Korea or in Vietnam. We did. The U.S.S.R. has not placed troops in the Panama Canal, in Central or South America. We have. The U.S.S.R. is not placing troops in Lebanon. We are. In Hungary, after the Second World War, that government solicited Soviet aid also (1956). The same situation appertained in Czechoslovakia (1968). The whole world is aware that the United States was attempting to "destabilize" the governments of those nations bordering on the Soviet Union. It was designed as a geo-political maneuver of some magnitude and import. The world was well aware that all of those nations were turning to Marxism and that the United

States was attempting to stop the process, covertly. Why do you suppose the C.I.A. invented and financed the "Christian Democratic Parties" throughout Europe?

The government of the United States is a prime supplier of military hardware to all of the nations of the world.

Your question indicates a total ignorance of near and recent history. I am appalled that you are not up to date.

The rejoinder to you is that it is the Christian United States which is the menace and does the warmongering; not either the Atheist U.S.S.R., the Atheist China, the Atheist Albania, or the Atheist Japan.

S: *Doesn't the atheistic* ***movement*** *take the place of a religion?*

A: Humankind does not need a replacement for a psychologically crippling disease. When a doctor cures a cancer he does not look for some other disease to take its place. Healthy, educated, fulfilled persons do not need a support system. The American Atheist Center is trying to work itself out of existence, for once we are free **from** religion, an Atheist Center will no longer be needed, except for the preservation of the history of the fight. It will become a museum and an archives.

S: *Are you perfect?*

A: Damn near so.

S: *Do you not deal with insecurity and personal inadequacy?*

A: I have none of those feelings at all, at any level of my being or in any aspects of my life. However, I am 63 years old now and have had a uniquely filled life. Now, as to Atheists generally, I am certain that many Atheists still have residual feelings of both insecurity and personal inadequacy because — generally speaking — they may have been indoctrinated into such behavior in their early lives. But, these are probably short term "seizures," or "throw backs" of inadequacy feelings, off and on, which they can and do overcome. They don't make a life-style out of it as a good Christian is supposed to do. Also, they will eventually get over all of it, as I have done.

What is thrilling to contemplate is a future where inadequacy and insecurity are not deliberately programmed into children as a means of control and where people will never have experienced it at all.

S: *In the past 10 years have you compared the "Lord's Prayer" said in the Catholic Church and Protestant churches? How do they differ?*

A: The Roman Catholics — and I am always very careful to point out that we are all talking about the **Roman** Catholic Church, ruled not from an American base or institution, but rather from Rome — use the Douay version of the Bible and the Protestants use what is called the King James version. The history of the writing of the Bible, its different versions, is very convoluted and I will not go into it at this time.

But, to answer your question, I have — of course — compared the Roman Catholic and the Protestant versions of the so-called "lord's prayer" and basically the Protestants refer to debts, while the Roman Catholics refer to trespasses and the conclusions are different, with the Protestants including the "thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever" while the Roman Catholics omit this.

(For the benefit of readers, the prayers are here put side by side so that the differences can be clearly seen.)

Douay	King James
Our father, who are in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.	Our father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Other than that, I do not know what answer you seek with the question you posed.

S: *What* ***meaning*** *does history have for you? (i.e., what is your historical perspective, where is history moving?) Perhaps more to the point, do you view history through a secular eschatological framework? or what?*

A: That's a good question. I do not know if such a course is available at your university but when I was in the graduate school of history at Western Reserve University in Ohio, I took a course called "History of

Historiography." Through that I learned that there have been many histories written based on different premises posed by the author. The Christian religion's foundation for history is the revelation of god's purpose through the activities of man. I do not find that to be an appropriate posit.

You used the word eschatological. This is religious terminology. It comes from the Greek word *eschatos* which means "last, or farthest." Eschatology is a branch of theology concerned with the final events in the history of the world or of mankind, specifically concerned with the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, and the nature of human existence upon the completion of history.

Atheists eschew this kind of nonsense thinking. To specifically answer you, we do not view history through a secular eschatological framework. History is merely a fragmentary, often inaccurate, chronological record of remembered significant events of what has occurred as humankind has adjusted to nature, struggled to survive, adapted lifestyles to changing situations, and accumulated knowledge. We attempt to interpret past events in the light of the cultural level of the times. We are rarely judgmental and do not at all attempt to attach religious or theoretical causality to those occurrences. Our information is too slim.

All we can do is gather as much information as we can and learn from that.

As to a secular eschatological view of projected future history — when our sun novas, kid, that's the ball game. It will be human barbeque time.

S: *What is your definition of a miracle?*

A: Atheists and theists are agreed on the definition of the term. It is a "seeming" break in natural laws. The interpretation of that term is where the difference of opinion arises. The theist explains this as an extraordinary event manifesting divine (or supernatural — *i.e.*, greater than nature) intervention, in nature usually in behalf of human affairs. The Atheist sees a so-called miracle as merely a natural phenomenon as yet unexplained.

I need to be more precise. Let me use two types of examples, those found in the Bible and those found in the ordinary course of our present lives. The Bible is full of miracles, of course. Jesus is said to have returned life to a dead man, Lazarus. The theist holds that the man was very dead. The Atheists, in so far as they accept the story for inspection

of it, give no credence to the tale and postulate that the man may have been very ill, with the appearance of death, and that circumstances were such that he was roused from his coma-like illness at a particular and propitious moment when the alleged miracle worker, Jesus Christ, happened to be there. We see no import in the situation. Also, we feel that it could be a story made out of whole cloth, never having happened at all, but merely recited in your holy book to gain your credence in the wonder-working of your mythical god, Jesus Christ.

There are alleged miracles today also. They do not occur now with the frequency that they did when people were more credulous. Most miracles now have to do with recovery from illness. For example, often in cases of cancer there is a remission of the tumor. It simply grows smaller (shrinks) and finally disappears. Medical science still does not know why. The theist patient will see this as the hand of god. The Atheist patient accepts it as an unexplained but certainly welcome phenomenon. Remission comes in both theistic and Atheistic cancer patients. One, as indicated, credits god and prayer; the other is pleased to be a subject of study by medical science to see how others can be helped. The latter is a sane approach.

S: *Do you like black people?*

A: In my answers to your questions, I try to respond as the leader of American Atheists and speak in their behalf, knowing as I do so many of them, their attitudes, and their opinions. When you ask me a direct personal question, *i.e.*, "Do **you** — etc.?", I must respond as Madalyn O'Hair, individual, not as a representative of the Atheist cause.

I am going to assume, in my first reply to this question, that the use of the word "you" in this query is generic, meaning "Atheists, as a body of persons."

The American Atheists' official position is that persons are always to be evaluated as individuals — on their own unique personalities — and not because they are members of a race, an ethnic group, a nation, or any other arbitrary division of humankind, such as the division of sex. An Atheist will form an emotional bond such as "liking" on an individual, one-to-one basis. The summary of this remark is that Atheists do not have a bias against a fellow human on the basis of skin color or race.

Now, let me answer the question personally. I quite frequently find myself angry with blacks as a group. The preponderance of them are captured in the Baptist church worshipping a white god, the representatives of which held them, as a race, in slavery in the United States for

over 200 years. It is just damn dumb of a black to lick the hand of the god that brutalized his ancestors and placed him in a class position of social/educational/economic inferiority in the culture of the nation today. I can't understand why they, as a group, cling to psychological subservience after having been rescued from a physical subservience.

Of course, I don't know all blacks. I have black friends and have had them most of my life. I like my friends — or I would not have chosen them to be my friends. There are some nationally visible blacks whom I admire; for instance, Andrew Young, who was once a U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. However, I deplore that he is a black minister also. And, I confess I was much taken by Stokely Carmichael. I did not recognize him as the C.I.A. plant that he was later revealed to be. I did not much like a black actor known as Step 'n Fetchit who played in the cinema in the '40s and '50s. He was willing to depict the black as a classic idiot, rolling eyes, being subservient, eating watermelon and fried chicken — and my black friends are not like that at all. I can muster up a decent repugnance of a number of blacks today — the recent mass murderer of children in Atlanta, Georgia, is a good example. But, in all of these recited instances, I am not relating to their quality of being blacks, but to their individual unique personalities, their idea systems, and their values as reflected in their personal activity.

To answer your question as an individual and not as a representative of or spokesperson for all Atheists, to the query "Do you like black people?" the answer is sometimes yes and sometimes no, depending on the specific black. If you change the word "black" to "brown," or to "yellow," or to "red," the answer is going to be the same.

I will volunteer to go further with this thought. If you change the question to "Do you like Christians?", there is going to be yet another answer. It is absolutely inexcusable for human beings, collectively or individually, to latch on to completely psychotic ideas and to decide to premise their lives on them. When a person says to me as a preliminary statement, "I am a Christian," I have an immediate intellectual repugnance for that person. Inside of me I quail and think, "How can anyone openly associate with a group of ideas which has caused more misery to all humankind for so long?" I hope you heard what I said: *an intellectual repugnance*. Often these persons may be, on the surface, warm, kind, and well meaning, even personable. Emotionally, one can become quickly involved with them. It is only when that outer facade is penetrated that one comes face to face with the real horror underneath. At this point in my life, I personally do *not* like Christians. They turn me off completely.

S: *Do you consider yourself to be a social deviant [sic]?*

A: From time to time your grammatical errors are so outrageous that I simply must correct them. The word "deviant" is an adjective, not a noun. You want to use the noun "deviate" instead.

The answer is yes. I consider myself and all Atheists to be in advance of the future times when the world will be Atheist. It is difficult to be a forerunner, a leader, a reformer, a radical, a revolutionary. We merely point out where there is an enormous basic error in our culture and how we plan to correct that error so that you and your progeny (and mine) may have a better life.

Considering that a deviate is one who is characterized by a *significant* departure from the behavioral norms of a particular society, the Atheists are happy to be that far out of the Judeo-Christian culture of the United States. We are working for a revolution the site of which is between the ears. Americans need a revolution there.

S: *I have read that "no society of a level such as we know it today could exist without the force of Christianity — or something to take its place."*

Do you propose a force to take the place of Christianity, or merely to abolish the force in our society all together?

A: It is quite obvious that the statement which you quoted comes from a Christian. If you asked a Muslim leader he would change that to read, "No society of a level such as we know it today could exist without the force of Mohammedism — or something to take its place." That was the cry of the followers of Ra (the great Egyptian god), of Zeus (the Greek god), of Thor (the Scandinavian god), and so on, for all the gods of all times in all countries.

All that the Atheist asks is that the scientific method be used to tackle the economic, social, cultural, and political problems of our times and that we continue to rely on science, education, and reason rather than on faith, belief, and mysticism. Humankind has never tried to stand free of religious crutches; let's go that route once and see if it is efficacious. The Atheists think so.

S: *What is your philosophical reason for being against abortion?*

A: Please remember that my statement had to do with *abortion as a primary means of birth control.* Under no circumstances would I ever

say to a woman or a doctor, "You may NOT utilize abortion when it is medically or psychologically necessary." That is not a decision which is mine to make.

I spent a number of years as a psychiatric social worker and a supervisor of psychiatric social workers. Abortion is not a casual thing to any woman. There are often psychological problems attached thereto. Let me tell you the story of Linda. She was of a wealthy family and when she became pregnant in her early teens, her family flew her to Japan to have an abortion at a hospital there since it was impossible to obtain one in the United States at the time. It was, apparently, bungled, for when she married in her early twenties, she spent the next dozen years attempting to have a child and failing to achieve a full-term pregnancy. Her psychological problems ruined three marriages of which I know. The story is close to me because one of those marriages was into my immediate family.

Similar stories can be found in the hundreds of thousands, perhaps in the millions.

I am quite conversant with every method of abortion that there is: dilatation and curettage, vacuum curettage, intra-amniotic hypertonic saline ("salting-out"), hysterotomy, the use of prostaglandins, ergot compounds, the intrusion of apparati into the uterus ("the coat-hanger solution"), flushing the uterus with toxic fluids, excessive physical exertion, deliberate stair-falls. Our organization issued, free, during the 1960s decade, an elaborate 47-page handbook on birth control (published in Canada and smuggled into the U.S.) in order to be of assistance in this matter to the women of our nation. ("Birth Control Handbook," issued by McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada).

It is extremely difficult to deal with the uterus. It is often even more difficult to handle the psychological problems which come to women who have had abortions. Religions lay heavy burdens of sin and guilt on these women!

Atheists constantly emphasize that sex education and widely disseminated information concerned with all of the methodology of birth control is the answer. On an individual basis, family size can be controlled; and on a national, or world, basis, population can be controlled. A woman's desire for children, her fear of having children, or even her desire NOT to have children are considerations which must also be taken into account. In addition, there is never a pregnancy without a male involved — despite the claims of the Virgin Mary. And, that male cannot be totally disregarded.

I have no "philosophical reason" for my position. It is a pragmatic one which comes from a study of the medical and psychological problems involved in abortion.

S: *Is there a **moral** reason?*

A: Again and again I must remind you that Atheists eschew morals and opt for ethics. The former term, heavily saturated with religion, is repugnant to us; the latter term, which smacks of the use of reason, is preferred by Atheists.

For myself, personally, my ethical position is that I would not choose an abortion. I have never done so. Of course, I am past the age of childbearing now. The idea is repugnant to me but I have not been able to sort out to my own satisfaction why this is so. I think that I have a certain reverence for life. That is a term made famous in my young adult days by Dr. Albert Schweitzer, a public figure whose work and ideas I much admired for many years. The word reverence then was used to presuppose an inviolable, intrinsically meritorious, quality. I thought then that life had such a quality; I do now, still. Another consideration is that I love children. I enjoyed being a mother. I wanted more children than I had. I feel that I have fulfilled the only command which my species has really given to me, individually, and that is to preserve the species by propagating it.

I see that other women feel and think otherwise. I understand all of their positions and the arguments which sustain them. Nothing will be solved by placing an onus upon these women, picturing them as pariahs (outcasts), condemning them.

The same churches which attempt to keep sex education out of our public schools, the same churches which suppress information about birth control methods, medicines, or paraphernalia, are those churches which are most condemnatory. They enforce sexual ignorance and then punish the frightened woman who becomes pregnant because of that ignorance. This is what is "immoral" with the abortion issues of our day: that the churches restrict information or aid and then punish women for their lack thereof.

S: *Can you forgive your son for turning to Christianity?*

A: None of you know what is going on. I do. And, my reactions are personal. No matter what queries you pose, I will not respond to them.

S: *Who is your God?*

A: Atheists have none, nor do I.

S: *Whom do you worship, if anybody or anything?*

A: Atheists find value systems eclectically. That is — where there is a good idea, we pluck it and put it into our bouquet of life. Along the way, I have admired many persons. I have never worshipped anyone, or anything. Notable among those whom I have admired were my mother and father, my grandparents, some aunts and uncles, a number of my cousins — and outside of my family I had the whole world from which I could choose, in all the history of humankind. I hold many, many persons dear, hundreds, perhaps thousands.

S: *Are you a lesbian?*

A: (After a little pause) I am tempted not to respond to your question on the basis that my sex life is none of your damn business. I have never had that query posed.

(A further pause) I have now concluded in my own mind that my first reaction here tonight is correct. It **is** none of your damn business.

S: *Where do you get your foundations for history if you do not believe in the Bible?*

A: Incredibly, that question is often posed. I have had callers on talk shows insist that the Bible was the basis of history and the oldest book in the world.

As discussed before, history has no "foundation;" it is merely a record of remembered events.

S: *What is your view on cosmology?*

A: You have a hard time with certain ideas. I see this as a basis for many of your questions. It matters little what my view, or even your view, on cosmology is.

I define the term first so that we are in agreement concerned with that which we discuss. There are really two widely different definitions. The first is that cosmology is a branch of "metaphysics" that deals with the universe as an orderly system. Atheists reject all "metaphysics" out of

hand as esoteric mumbo jumbo. The second definition of cosmology is that it is a branch of astronomy that deals with the origin, structure, and space-time relationships of the universe.

As far as the Atheists are concerned, this is an open-ended subject. The position of astronomers is, basically, that they are still gathering data. Most, if not all, of their positions are theoretical at this point.

S: *How can you put down the government as such, when without it this whole great country of the United States would be nothing without [sic]? Mr. Regan [sic] is doing a pretty good job, but he's not GOD! In other words, everyone is not perfect, and if we are doing our best, how can you put them [sic] down?*

A: That's his best!!

The greatness of our nation lies in the premises upon which the nation was founded, the underlying political theories. Have you ever given consideration to the fact that these men of vision, over 200 years ago, saw that which our current politicians cannot even envisage now? We do NOT have equal justice under law in the United States. We do NOT have equal opportunities. We do NOT have freedom of conscience. I could go on indefinitely. All of these the founding fathers saw as ends the nation must reach.

What I have discussed here tonight is that the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States is under attack by religious fundamentalists, with a view toward restricting the rights enumerated therein. Listen to the news; read the papers. The information envelops you that our Bill of Rights, science, education, and women are under attack by radical right wing religionists. I warn you to preserve what we have and to enhance all those rights.

You say everyone is not perfect. We can strive not alone toward perfection but to a better accommodation of the structure of our social order to the needs of all our people, collectively. Our founding fathers envisaged the greatest good for the greatest number and that is still a viable goal for our nation.

President Reagan would not know the meaning of the term.

S: *Are a [sic] Atheist?*

A: I can't believe that you would ask that question after what I presented here tonight and after this much of the question and answer session.

Yes. I am an Atheist.

S: *Why then do you have an assembly of followers from whom you draw support and to whom you donate money [sic]?*

A: Well, let me go, once more, to my handy-dandy case here. My son, Jon Murray, has written a number of our brochures and this particular one is entitled, "Why Is An Atheist Organization Needed In The U.S. Today?" After outlining that there is gross discrimination against Atheists, he asks what they can do about it. His reply is:

> They can band together in a group and pool their resources, both monetary and intellectual, in an effort to make their voices heard collectively in a way that no individual voice can be heard. Atheists come in many shapes and sizes and political bents, but they all have their desire for *freedom from religion* in common. Any one of them alone can easily be defeated monetarily and psychologically by the religious community as they strive toward this right. *Together* they can stand firm and support an organization that can represent their interest through litigation and community public relations activities, much like an individual worker can magnify his bargaining power manyfold by forming a union with others.
>
> This is why an Atheist organization is needed in the U.S. today. American Atheists only asks you to agree on one issue, your right to *freedom from religion*, and to lend your support to the maintenance of that right. Your individual autonomy is guaranteed in all other areas: political, ethical, racial, economic. American Atheists, the organization, stands firm on three issues under the mandate of its constituency:
>
> (1) Your right to freedom *from* religion.
>
> (2) Your right to have your government adhere to its original promise of maintaining complete and absolute separation of state and church so that this nation will never become a theocracy under an American Ayatollah Khomeini.
>
> (3) Your right to equal protection and civil rights under law, as an Atheist.
>
> We think that those are rights worth uniting to preserve, don't you?
>
> I know you have the additional query as to what an Atheist organization does.
>
> It educates its members and the public at large as to what Atheism is. It litigates state/church separation issues to maintain

the right of the Atheist to be free *from* religion. It supports free *secular* public education for all our children, up through graduate school. It is developing and propagating a social philosophy which is wholesome and will strengthen humankind's reach for the well-being and happiness of all people, everywhere. It emphasizes our need to rely on science, reason, and education to solve any human problem anywhere. It provides a social forum for Atheists to share their life commitments with those of like mind. It helps Atheists to attain, appreciate, and be proud of their rightful place in society. It keeps its membership informed on a continuing basis of those events which affect their lives as Atheists.

The American Atheists have already removed Bible reading and prayer recitation from the public schools; placed Atheist books and the *American Atheist* magazine in every major library in the United States; developed an informational American Atheist Radio Series; produced and distributed a half-hour weekly "American Atheist Forum" television series seen by 2½ million persons each week on cable television; maintained an American Atheist Speakers' Bureau; operated through a network of 43 chapters in 28 states; established an American Atheist Sustaining Trust Fund to finance its operation; founded and is maintaining the largest library of Atheist material in the world; established The American Atheist Center in Austin, Texas, and The American Atheist Museum in Petersburg, Indiana; pioneered a "Dial-An-Atheist" program to inform and inspire Atheists in many cities across our nation; established an international outreach to other Atheist groups throughout the world through the *United World Atheists*; and sponsored a World Atheist Meet every three years. The last such Meet was held in India, and the next such Meet will be held in Finland in June, 1983.

It is more difficult to organize Atheists than it is to organize Anarchists. They are equally independent. In these associations, we do not have leaders and followers. Some persons are more articulate than others and those are the persons who become spokesmen for the group. Those with skills which can be maximized are sought out.

The need for organization is obvious. If we are — for example — pressed to pay more taxes so that the churches can be tax free, it is a compelling necessity that we combine in order to have that inequity countered. It was Jefferson who noted ". . . that to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he

disbelieves and abhors, is sinful and tyrannical. . . ." (See page 64.)

S: *My presupposition was that atheism is the belief that an individual needs no security from groups or from gods.*

A: Once again, Atheism is not a belief. It is a position taken that is free *from* theism. The most independent person in the world is still a part of the human race and still a part of association with others, but not necessarily in a dependency or security-seeking association. But, we recognize that certain groups are dependent and do need security furnished since those groups do not have innate capacity for self-help. Examples of these groups are children, the ill, the aged. Often the dependency is time-constrained, as with all three examples cited.

As a matter of fact, almost every noun which is used by humankind for identification purposes is a relationship noun, such as father, mother, child, son, parent, worker, hunter, judge, jurist, student, teacher. These words are relationship words since we are all, in each culture, in relationship to one another and to the whole. We are all members of innumerable groups, groups within groups.

These groupings could be related to your premise of "security." What we all seek is economic security, security against catastrophes, security against the weather, security in our functioning positions, our positions of employment. Let me give you the example of wage rates in the sale of your services and skills and your need to be maintained in employment. Unions can provide economic and other security to workers through the combined efforts of their members. This could be called the security of the group. Seat belts in automobiles prove a certain security against one's being thrown forward in case of a sudden stop.

But what your question reaches is, "Do Atheists need emotional security in the form of a comforting daddy in the sky?" The answer is no: Atheists as a part of the human community reach out to other humans for felt needs.

S: *Why do you need the support of your group?*

A: I don't need the implied emotional support of any person in order to be an Atheist. In order to fight a court case which costs $50,000, the organization which I head needs the financial support of a number of Atheists.

S: *Are you truly atheistic by definition?*

A: You can bet your sweet bippy, I am.

S: *Can you, in fact, stand by yourself as you profess to be able to do?*

A: I feel no need to prove this to anyone. In me, "what you see is what you get." I have it all together.

S: *Actually this question should be addressed to the student body: How can you seeth with anger and hatred at the thought of being exposed to beliefs other than your own, and call yourself a child of God?*

A: But, the question presumes that Christians are love-filled, kind, understanding, warm, considerate, and accepting. The history of Christianity belies that. In this case with this student group here, also, "what you see is what you get."

S: *How did you feel when your son became a* ***born again Christian****?*

A: I feel now, as I did then, with my fingers.

S: *We as Christians do not swear, live, and die by the Sermon on the Mount. We believe in the promised Life after Death, yea victory over Death that Jesus Christ came to Earth, taught and died for! Please learn not our Religion, but our faith and relationship with Christ! At least, ask your son, Bill Murray about it!*

A: I can't help you. You are too far gone.

I know Christians' faith and their pretentions of a relationship with the mythological figure of Jesus well enough to know whence you are coming. Here, tonight, you would repudiate the most famous lessons your Christ allegedly taught because I have pointed out to you certain aspects of it which you do not like. Can't you see the contradiction in what you say? You would repudiate the doctrines of Jesus Christ, but associate yourself with the alleged sacrifice of his life over those doctrines. The two, being inseparable, you separate them!

You cannot have a relationship with a boogey man. Too many of you Christians look skyward and say, "I love Jesus who has redeemed me." I would like to see some of you embrace the token blacks from the

ghettoes of our nation, some of whom are here in your school. That takes too much effort! It is too difficult to do! You can live with and pretend to love the ephemeral Jesus; the human being beside you presents too much of a challenge. The doctrines "he taught" are good enough to contemplate on a mystical level, but too dangerous to follow as rules of your life.

S: *How can there [crossed out] you to someone to go to hell for with hell [these last three words crossed out] Because the opposite of Hell is God and Heaven [sic].*

A: I do not know what you have in mind. I have not told anyone here tonight to go to hell, but you tempt me. I am constrained not to do so since I know that hell is imaginary and my directions to you would be inutile.

S: *Where did you get your statistics that although the Catholic Schools have 25% of the students, it [sic] receives 78% of federal aid?*

A: Earlier tonight, I reviewed the bill which Ronald Reagan had put into the Congressional hopper asking for tuition tax grants for parents with students in parochial schools. I reviewed the situation worldwide and pointed out that this was an order of the Vatican, not a felt need arising in our nation. I then surveyed how this Vatican order was being implemented by Roman Catholics throughout the world. I referred to Australia and the 1981 case *Attorney-General for The State of Victoria v. The Commonwealth of Australia*. That case won complete state support for the Roman Catholic schools in Australia. The lawyers involved in the case have not alone supplied me with the case material, but with statistical information related to the distribution of the Australian state largess to the parochial and the public schools since. The figures which you have noted are correct. I would wish that you would be more attentive to the facts surrounding such figures.

S: *Mrs. O'Hair, is your hell the same as our hell?*

A: This university must be a bed of suppressed human sexuality, since all of you have hell uppermost in your mind, although I did not dwell on it at all in my presentation.

Relax! Those sexual urgings which you feel are very normal for your age. Relax — and enjoy them. In reality, "where it is at" in our day and

age is that you need not have a fear of hell. There is no hell for either you or me.

S: *Satan has been to hell and returned. I have a great suntan.*

A: I suppose that passes for humor at Georgetown University.

S: *What was the year in which Jefferson spoke to the Baptists about "separation"?*

A: He did not speak to them. He had a letter exchange with them in 1802, during which time he was the President of the United States. (See page 24.)

S: *What did he say in 1819?*

A: I have no idea what you are seeking. I am certain Jefferson said a great deal in 1819. Let's see, that was 10 years after his presidency and 7 years before he died. He was 76 years old then.

Perhaps what you are hoping to say, cryptically, is that Jefferson renounced his separation doctrines in his old age. If he had, the religious nuts of our nation would be shouting it from the rooftops and American Atheists would have met it in court citations of the many state/church separation cases we have litigated.

It is always dangerous to try to give short quotes and unless we can back up what we quote with the sustained life support of the proposition by the person involved, we hesitate to quote. You see, if someone would quote Madalyn O'Hair at age 10, there could even be quotes of prayers which I said at that time. As I have had the job of explicating the Atheist position, I have made errors. I was corrected in one instance by GORA, an Atheist leader from India. Since he proved logically to me that I was not emphasizing in a proper way, I changed the presentation of several Atheist concepts. I don't know about Jefferson and what you seek, but I do know about this; let me use it to illustrate because it is interesting. GORA pointed out to me that just as the word "independent" meant freedom from dependency, that I should emphasize that the word "Atheist" meant freedom from theism. That it would be a more striking representation and more easily understood. He was right. (I am not being disrespectful of GORA by using that one name designation for him. It is an Atheist practice in India to utilize one name and he chose an anagram composed of first letters of each of his names —

which were GOparaju RAmachandra RAo.)

S: *Why do you call our religion absurb [sic]? Believe what you want. Why do you feel you can ridicule [sic] other's religions?*

A: Some one simply must stand up in the face of religious absurdity and say that the ideas are nonsensical. "The emperor has no clothes." I cannot treat with intellectual respect your idea of a soul, or of heaven, or hell, or a redeemer god. This is 1982, not the Stone Age.

When we can unravel the secrets of the D.N.A., we *cannot* as a culture, accept that your mythological Jesus drove demons out of a human being and into a herd of swine. We cannot posit these absurdities for the basis of decisions we make, for instance, in respect to health care in the United States today. When I go to a hospital I want my broken leg set, I don't want anyone to pray over it.

We have critical problems in our culture — our system is breaking down around us and we cannot trust in Jesus to drive out the demons. We cannot approach the problems of inflation, of unemployment, of festering slums, high crime rate, increased use of drugs, with another more deadly use of drugs: the drug of religion, the paralysis of the brain. It is important that we solve our problems, wisely and well, together, by reason.

In summary, I categorize your religion as absurd, because it is. It is also dangerous to our culture in that it draws from the energy needed to repair and renovate and it wastes billions of dollars and endless hours of human energy, each year.

S: *What do people need to be happy?*

A: Awareness that happiness is an attainable goal, a state of being that can be reached by any ordinary person.

S: *Your tactics of spreading the word about atheism resemble those used by evangelists. Doesn't this make your beliefs (or the lack of them) subject to the same criticism as Catholicism or Methodism?*

A: American Atheists do not have a church where I, or any Atheist, pontificates each Sunday. When I give a lecture, or a speech, there are questions and answers at the end of each. How many of you have ever felt free to question the minister in the pulpit at the end of his Sunday ravings?

Have you ever seen an evangelical get on to a talk show and take all comers? When did Billy Graham ever do that? Their broadcasts are carefully planned, staged, orchestrated, to see that no questions are asked, no inquiries are possible, no reply can be made.

Do you see Atheists anywhere with the paraphernalia of stained glass windows, organ music, incense?

At the end of this presentation, I will not have several ushers pass along each aisle with baskets so that you can drop in your donations — tax deductible, of course.

Please note that I do not have draped upon my body an $800 silk suit, $400 lizard shoes, that my fingers are not dripping with diamonds, nor do I sport a solid gold Rolex watch.

Nor, at the end of this will I plead that you give me money for the starving children in Sri Lanka (who will never see any money collected by an evangelical weeping over them).

There are only a few ways that one can hope to educate the populace of our nation. One can write books, go on lecture tours, be a guest on two-way talk/back shows on both radio and television, use direct mail to send out educational material, or publish one's own journal (magazine). American Atheists use all of these avenues of expression and none of them have anything in common with religion, evangelical or orthodox. Indeed, all "cause" organizations use these same techniques: women's groups, gay groups, ecology groups. We all handle the logistics of our educational outreach in the same manner.

American Atheists refuse to be included in your circle because the premises on which we build are rational while the premises on which religion builds is irrational. That is the fundamental difference. Since the base of each is different, the tactics are different. It takes a religious huckster to offer what religion has for sale. It takes a knowledgeable and principled educator to present the issues of Atheism.

S: *What is your opinion of Pope John Paul II's high standing in the world's political affairs, and effect his opinions make on his followers?*

A: The media in the Christian nations is subservient to the Pope and builds him as a world leader of renown. He is a medievalist, a reactionary and dangerous man. He should be charged in the world court for crimes against humanity for his attitude towards and dictates to women of all nations. He has reimposed censorship, reinstated the inquisitorial office, called women to the bearing of more children while subjecting her to the domination of men, denounced science and education, and

made no effort to halt the spread of nuclear buildups. He is probably principally responsible for the terrible problems of Poland through his efforts, along with the C.I.A. to destabilize the government of that nation. This is a thoroughly despicable man and history will judge him as that.

The effect that his opinions have on his followers is amply demonstrated in the United States where there are more Roman Catholic women on the Pill than there are Protestant. The women of his church defy him in matters of birth control and pregnancy. There are fewer men taking up the priesthood in his reign than in any other and fewer women committing themselves to the nunneries. The collection of "Peter's pence," the traditional yearly offering to the Pope from all over the world, is failing to such an extent that the Vatican is currently operating in the red at the annual rate of $20 to a possible $30 million. A scandal has developed in that he has had to use the profits from the Vatican bank, which carries the name of "Institute for Religious Works" in order to sustain these annual costs of the Vatican. Nuns are going on strike rather than teach under adverse conditions in parochial schools and everywhere one can see Roman Catholics freely divorcing.

The Roman Catholic Church alleges that it has the second largest religious group in the world. Interestingly, the Muslims are *numero uno*. It is the power of this many figures which gives the Pope the attention of the media, not his intellectuality or his personality. And, please remember that he simply inherited this many Roman Catholics throughout the world. He is not responsible for bringing them into the church.

The international press also tried to present to the world the picture that Anwar Sadat was much loved by the Egyptian people. But, when he was shot by an assassin, the situation was clear. The people hated him so much that they did not even mourn, in a country which traditionally displays the phenomenon of great mass mourning for its leaders.

Perhaps with television now in the world rolling 24 hours a day, more truth will out than we could have hoped and these phony world leaders will be revealed for the outer shells of make-believe that they are.

S: *Why should I have to proove [sic] there is a God — you proove [sic] to me that there is* ***not*** *a God!*

A: Once again, the burden of proof is on the person who presents a theory, or invents a god. I suggest that you take a short course in logic. I presume that your university has one. I have covered this same errone-

ous assumption several times tonight.

S: *In what **form** are the churches receiving $50 billion a year? Only tax exemptions?*

A: The figures are rounded up principally from the government. Churches receive direct grants of money from federal, state, county, city, and borough governments. Most frequently these are for sectarian health, education, and welfare services. Sometimes they are also for penal services since most religious organizations operate penal or correctional homes. They receive federal grants to refurbish their buildings, for administrative costs of programs of federally funded social welfare programs, for record keeping. They receive money to handle the aged, persons in nursing homes, foster care children, and indigents in church hospitals. In fact, their hospitals alone receive enormous grants from the Hill-Burton fund. They receive an estimated $25 billion a year in those innocent little collection baskets, for all of which the religious folk take a write-off on their I.R.S. form 1040 — causing those of us who do not to pay more income taxes. This $25 billion does not include the money they receive from corporations and foundations, the interest on their bank accounts, the profits from their businesses, the dividends from their stocks and bonds, the rents from their real estate.

Tax exemption benefits? Why, we never even get to that in the count with this mere $50 billion a year. Recent reports out also indicate that this is a very serious underevaluation and that the real figure may be $150 billion! Further research is needed.

S: *Why are you not attacking the fact that the government regulates practically every other aspect of our lives since that is your argument against prayer in public schools?*

A: I am happy that the government has installed traffic lights that keep us from slaughtering one another at every intersection. I am delighted with the magnificent roadways our nation has — on which you and I are free to travel. I am satisfied that we have almost 65% literacy in our nation through the beneficial effects of free public schooling and that we are working to increase that. It gives me peace of mind to know that there are free fire stations dotting every town, that the police are there in times of difficulty and especially with traffic control. I breathe a sigh of relief to know that uncaring manufacturers are being monitored so that they do not dump sewage into my drinking water. I am benefitted in that

garbage is collected weekly in my hometown. I thank the government agency that told the chemical manufacturers "No more thalidomide." My granddaughter has never had measles, mumps, chicken pox, all those diseases which plagued the children of our nation until just recently, thanks to enforced vaccination programs. I am delighted that my son's automobile was recalled by government order and that the manufacturer was forced to replace faultily designed brakes. I accept that we were wrong, as a nation, to exclude the blacks from public eating places, hotels, and schools, and I am happy that our government forced the correction of this grievous error.

If this nation had to rely on the goodness, the kindness, and the generosity of its dominant Christian population, we would still have the Middle Ages in our midst. Government regulation is a two way street. Better that your school here meets the accreditation standards of the great State of Texas than you should be receiving an education at the low level of Bob Jones University in South Carolina.

S: *Must one be an atheist to possess total self-confidence?*

A: It helps more than anything else of which I know.

S: *Why do you object to public prayer (example: opening prayer at city council meetings, football games, etc.) as well as prayer in public schools when the constitution of the United States clearly guarantees that "no law respecting the establishment of religion or the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech . . ." Congress will pass. Prayer isn't against your constitutional rights, your successful objection to it is against mine.*

A: Apparently, I need to repeat this over and over again. The issue is not individual public prayer; it is the government sponsorship of prayer which is affected by that part of the First Amendment which speaks of "the establishment of religion." For government to sponsor, administer, and finance prayer — the essence, the core of religion — is for government to "establish religion," that which it is precluded from doing.

Religion is or ought to be a private affair. It is not — under our political system — to be commingled with government.

First, no one is stopping your being religious, or your prayers. You can go to the church of your choice and support it in any manner you desire. You can engage in religious behavior *almost* any time and any place. You really should not be sitting and chanting your mantras in the

middle of the freeway. I am certain that in your science courses here the instructors would not appreciate it if you decided, each day, to use classroom time to give a testimonial to Jesus Christ and thus disrupt the basic purpose of the class. General Motors would be horrified if the production line was stopped while someone stood on a partially completed automobile to praise the lord. Common sense is needed, and unfortunately, common sense is not so common nor so widely distributed as it should be. But, in any of these or in myriad other situations, you can be praying privately, and quietly, at any time, anywhere.

You could not say, however, that anyone was interfering with your religious rights if the police removed you from the freeway, your instructor escorted you out of the classroom, or General Motors kept the line going by whisking you out of the door.

The problem, inherent in your question, is that you expect everything in our culture to reflect your religious bias. If it does not, you put out your claim that all functions which are secular, as they should be — for example, in the illustrations which I have just given — that is, without your Christian saturation, are "against your rights." You do not take into consideration that you have no right to saturate the culture with your insanity as you do in the first place. Basically, we live in a secular world, not a religious one. In the United States I.B.M. is more important than Jesus Christ. Sears Roebuck easily supercedes the Virgin Mary and our highway system is more important than the Holy Ghost.

Second, the purpose of public governmental meetings is to administrate our secular society, not to indoctrinate with religion. When I vote for a politician seeking office, I am trying to indicate my confidence in his political, *i.e.*, secular, judgment. For him, in office, to seek guidance from a non-existent entity, supplicating such help before every open governmental meeting begins, removes any confidence I had in him. When politicians want religious guidance, they can privately seek out their own minister, priest, rabbi, or guru. They do not need to demonstrate their emotional and intellectual dependency or their inadequacies in either to the public before their governmental unit begins to function.

Every citizen votes for what (s)he hopes will be a competent officeholder, not a minister of the gospel, or a quaking religionist afraid to proceed on his own. The voter seeks someone with political acumen, not religious conviction.

Likewise when one goes to see a football, basketball, or hockey game, a swim meet, or other athletic competition, the purpose there is not an expression of religion but an exhibition of physical skills and,

usually, team coordination in regulated and competitive sports. If one wants to hear prayers, there are churches, or this activity can be practiced at home or privately while viewing the games.

The answer to your question is, then, that the free exercise of religion is a private matter between you and your god, and the government is the operation of a religious-free political system. The two are forbidden by the First Amendment, which you quote, to commingle one with the other. Government will not interfere in your *personal* religious domain; but conversely you are required to keep your religion out of government.

S: *Mrs. O'hair [sic], do you think that the [illegible] is working in the public school systems? If not then what do you think should be done about the matter of forced bussing [sic], and all white or black?*

A: As I indicated before, American Atheists speak on issues related to the problems of state/church separation and the civil libertarian rights of American Atheists. We do not intrude into other issues. This is a social issue beyond the scope of our organizational outreach.

I can answer you with my personal opinion in respect to what you term "forced busing" and "all white or black."

Every child in our nation is entitled to and should have, at public expense, the best possible education that this century can furnish to him. Unfortunately, the concept of "neighborhood schools," which is basically a good one, leaves the black student — usually — in a ghetto where the school physical plant is in shambles; the teachers are rejects from better positions or have inferior training; the texts are outdated and worn out; the proffered food is next to garbage; and any hope of adequate skills being taught is a cruel joke. For instance, good laboratories are unknown in these schools. But, when the parents languish in the same poverty which the schools display, when crime and high unemployment is peaking constantly, when malnutrition and disease are chronic, we need to rescue the children.

A better solution would have been to recognize the needs of the entire black community, not alone the children. If all the money of busing, and that much more, had been poured into a rehabilitation of the entire neighborhood as well as the schools, the black family — as distinguished from just the black child — would have had some chance. Absent landlords should be required to bring their profit-making rat-infested, decaying dwellings into compliance with at least minimal health and sanitation laws. The ghetto schools should have been ade-

quately financed and refurbished. The entire black communities need to be upgraded, with extensive on-site adult education also.

Lacking that, the children had to be bused to better facilities to give them even a remote chance of education equivalent to the middle class white students. It was a better solution than nothing at all — which is what the blacks received from the dominant white Christian culture since 1865. Also, it was cheaper than doing what needed to be done: to really accept the blacks into the American culture by bringing their communities to the level of those of the whites, providing them also with employment opportunities. It was a partial and stop-gap measure and, in a sense, one calculated really to outrage and cause a backlash. This is what has occurred.

S: *What would you do if there was some sort of afterlife — if you* ***knew*** *this a [sic] "second chance" to "get to heaven"? Would you still preach atheism?*

A: I must chuckle. I do *not* "preach" Atheism.

Since all we know is life — we can never know death — there is no need for me to make such a presumption and I will not.

S: *What kind of education did you have as far as your personal lives [sic]?*

A: I am, basically, a product of free public education in the United States. I attended public education in the United States. I attended public schools through high school. Even after that I attended state supported colleges and universities, most notably the University of Toledo (Ohio), the University of Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania), Western Reserve University (Ohio), Ohio Northern University (Ohio). My degrees are primarily in history and law. I was billed to speak to you tonight as Dr. O'Hair, and that is an earned doctorate of jurisprudence.

S: *What kind of religion were you exposed to?*

A: (See page 101.) At the time that my parents were married it was the practice that wives simply took the religion of their husbands and attended his church. My father was a Presbyterian. Upon their marriage, my mother — who was a Lutheran — began to attend the Presbyterian church and remained in it for the fifty years of their marriage. At any time that anyone asked her what her denomination

was, she invariably replied, "I am a Lutheran." That is a long preface to tell you that I was born into and reared in a Presbyterian family which had a high flavor of undercover Lutheranism in it. I never, however, attended anything but the Presbyterian church, during the period of my childhood indoctrination into religion.

S: *Are your "personal inadequacies [sic]" due to your training as a child?*

A: One "trains" dogs, not children. Also, I am asked if I was "raised" in a certain way. One raises corn, or wheat; one *rears* children. I cringe at what is happening to our language of late.

I have no personal inadequacies now. I am 63 and I have had a difficult life — as well as a happy one — as all people do. There are a great number of problems associated with living, just as there is much happiness. I have made a goodly share of mistakes as I went along and I have learned from those mistakes. The encounters we all have in life are worthwhile. Life is good, rich, and frequently purposeful both on many short-term and many long-term bases. It is worth the rivers of tears that one sheds to maintain it.

S: *What do the atheists do to promote black equality?*

A: Basically, we refuse to recognize the color. What I intend to say is that Atheists feel that there is only one race: the human race, and that there need not be, nor should not be, a distinction in treatment of human beings based upon either color or sex.

I once met Martin Luther King in a television studio in Chicago and opined to him that the blacks would progress when they got off of their knees in supplication and stood on their feet in self-understanding.

Let me remind you that 12% of our population in the United States is black. That is almost 27 million people. What the hell are they doing to promote their own equality? Don't look to the white man for help; you are not going to get it. This is a Christian racist country — look around you.

Your question is predicated on a "poor me" and "help me" attitude and implicit in it is a statement of your presumed dependency position. You want others to help you. Damn it, man! Help yourself! Stand on your feet! Fight for your own equality! You will appreciate it more when you get there. Don't go whining after the white man and *ask* for equality; demand it; seize it; it belongs to you!

S: *What facts back up your idea [crossed out] belief that Jesus Christ is a myth?*

A: Again and again and again: I don't "believe" anything. To believe is to "take on faith."

I am currently involved in research on the Jesus myth and at this point, right now, today, I have about 625 pages finished in a book which I have titled, tentatively, *Jesus Christ, Super Fraud*. It will go to about 1,000 pages or more before I conclude and then it will be necessary for me to cut that back to about 350 pages before sending it to my publisher. I have casually researched this for about 10 years and intensively researched for 2 years. It is impossible for me to give you the facts behind it in the answer to a question since the supporting facts are of considerable number.

Basically, I used sources of the time span 300 B.C. to A.D. 300 and in addition all of the Bible criticism which developed and progressed in Europe from about 1700 to about the year 1900. This criticism has not been brought to American shores.

Incidentally, the word Christ means simply, "oiled," anointed with oil, "the anointed one," and anyone who has been to India or anywhere in the Far East and has seen the oil-anointed statues of the Indian gods knows that this title is a trivial one.

By and large the religious community in the United States is illiterate insofar as the Bible or Bible criticism is concerned, or in the study of comparative religions. I hope to be able to change that and excite among our country's populace an interest in, at least, the European research.

If I needed to point out one particular aspect of the Jesus Christ story which is the most compelling, it is that there are simply no, **repeat, NO**, records of this supposed Christ in either secular history or even theology at or near the time he is alleged to have existed. All of the Bible critics are in basic agreement that the records simply are not there.

S: *If you think Heaven, Hell, Angels, God, etc. are nonsense words, why do you keep talking about it [sic]?*

A: I talk, when necessary, about the precepts of the Christian religion because that is the religion which is attempting to take political control of our nation and because this is the basis of our government's quarrel with two other great nations of the world — China and the U.S.S.R. — which are not religious.

The desire of these radical right wing religious groups to gain control is premised in the ideology of the Bible, both New and Old Testaments. The ideas which they desire to spread are fundamentally insane. The human community cannot abandon its reason, its scientific findings, its history and accept as guidelines the destructive primitivism of these ideas.

Let me give you a few. Moses, in the Bible, laid down not 10 commandments from the lord, but several hundred. He held these as having been given to him by god himself and binding upon all humankind for all years to come. These are so-called "universal laws of god" and god's contemplated consequences upon humankind for not keeping these are also outlined in the Bible. (We have discussed the idea of inflicting humankind with hemorrhoids as one of the punishments of the lord. See pages 110, 112-115.)

Now hear this sample which comes from Leviticus 14:25-29. And the priest

> shall kill the lamb of the trespass offering, and the priest shall take *some* of the blood of the trespass offering and put *it* upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot. And the priest shall pour of the oil into the palm of his own left hand: And the priest shall sprinkle with his right finger *some* of the oil that *is* in his left hand seven times before the LORD: And the priest shall put of the oil that *is* in his hand upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot, upon the place of the blood of the trespass offering: And the rest of the oil that *is* in the priest's hand he shall put upon the head of him that is to be cleansed, to make an atonement for him before the LORD.

If you think that in our modern day and age we can ask people to accept the foolishness of such a statement and demand that our citizen "atone before the lord" and have some freaked-out klutz in black robes and a little dinky doily on his head smearing oil on thumbs and right ears of the populace, you simply have to be bananas. And, I address you in this mien because you deserve no respect for believing this.

Is this going to solve the economic woes of the nation right now? Will it obviate a projected nuclear war?

And who will decide about "familiar spirits"? Jerry Falwell? or Reagan? Whatever am I talking about? I am talking about Leviticus 20:27 which — again in a direct order from god himself — commands: "A man

also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones; their blood *shall* be upon them." What kind of barbarity is this? How dare you hold forth that the Bible is a holy book or that one must subscribe to its tenets? It is sheer madness — demonstrated idiocy.

The concepts of heaven, hell, angels, and gods are on the same level. This is Judaic-Christian voodoo. Don't insult the intelligence of the citizens of the country by your pressing of these ideas upon them.

Cover yourself with intellectual shame and retire from the world.

S: *If these are not nonsense words to others, why don't you leave them alone?*

A: I cannot leave these ideas unchallenged because I am a member of humankind and ideas which are destructive to the human community must be exposed. Example: for years your Bible and your ministers preached the necessity of slavery, and the idea is embedded in your "good" book throughout. Your Jesus never once spoke to the need of the freedom of the slaves in his era. Yet this was ever a debasing concept and it had to be met and challenged. It was indeed "met and challenged" finally, specifically in our nation by a civil war, but that was as late as the 1860s. I would like to point out to you that no civil war was necessary in any European or African country to stop slavery there. It was our love-filled Christian Baptists who most staunchly supported it in the United States and incited the South emotionally so that an internal war was precipitated in our nation over this issue.

If a part of our nation accepts nonsense words as representative of valid ideas and then structures their lives around the irrational concepts which these words symbolize, they do damage to the entire culture in the proselytizing of them.

S: *How can you say "Go to hell" if you don't believe in heaven?*

A: I don't use that phrase and I have not used it tonight. It is an imperative sentence, with the implied subject of "You." It connotes magic in that the utterer is ordering the person to whom the command is addressed to proceed to hell. It is a "Do not pass GO; do not collect $200" order. And, no one on the earth has the power to order another person in this "make-believe posturing."

I presume that this is another "trickle down" theory. Perhaps it is where Reagan got the idea for his "trickle down" supply-side economic

theory. God, in the religion theory, can order persons to go to hell. Then, later, the clergy thought that they had power to issue this order. Then, later, the general populace picked up the habit and hurled the order back and forth as they became involved in petty arguments. Stop and think about the whole thing. If you become angry with your roommate and say, "Oh, go to hell!" do you really think that your order is efficacious?

I don't play children's games.

S: *How can you talk about Jesus Christ, then, if you don't believe in him?*

A: Again and again I will go over this because I am a patient teacher. Let's talk about Thomas Hardy's book *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

We both know that it is a fiction. How can we discuss ideas presented in it, if we do not talk about the cast of characters therein? The characters act in a certain manner to be objective lessons to the reader. It is in exactly this manner of learning by examination that I can discuss the fictitious character Jesus Christ. I can assure you that Jesus Christ means no more to me than does Fagin in the Charles Dickens novel *Oliver Twist*. I conceive that they have similar "moral" characters.

S: *I hear that you are currently engaged in a campaign to ban all religious programing [sic] from T.V. and radio. Is this another example of free expression?*

A: I need to take a few moments to answer this one and I am pleased that you brought it to everyone's attention tonight, since I did forget to include it in my formal presentation.

Out and out blatant lies have been circulated concerned with me throughout the United States. Each and every one has been invented and then fostered by the religious community for specific purposes.

In the early 1960s and 1970s two young men, Jeremy D. Lansman and Lorenzo W. Milam, were working to help minority groups set up non-commercial, educational, FM radio stations to have these groups reach out for solidarity of purpose. They were working with tiny little stations, which could only be heard around the immediate community in which they were located. And, as they sought places on the FM band for these tiny stations, they became more and more angry as they found that giant religious organizations were swallowing up the FM band. The only hope of the minority groups was on that FM band since the AM

band had more stringent federal requirements to meet and on the AM band one needed more elaborate and costly equipment and stations.

The two young men, on December 1, 1973, sent a petition to the FCC (that's the Federal Communications Commission) asking for a freeze on applications on the FM band until the FCC could review its policies by a full Commission inquiry into the existing situation. The petition itself said, "Religious broadcasters have shown a remarkable cancer-like growth into the 'educational' portions of the FM and TV bands. They control endless monies from 'free-will' contributions, thrive on mindless banal programming aimed at some spiritless, oleaginous God, and show the same spirit as McDonald's Hamburger Company in their efforts to dominate American radio and television."

They asked that the inquiry be directed to sectarian religious institutions which they saw as gobbling up the reserved *educational* FM and TV channels.

The FCC stamped the petition as received, gave it the file number RM-2493, and clocked it into the Rules and Standards Division of the FCC on December 6, 1973.

Within about a month the association of National Religious Broadcasters began a rumor that Madalyn O'Hair had filed 27,000 signatures on behalf of this petition, which was described as an attempt by Madalyn O'Hair to stop all religious broadcasting. At this point in time, I knew nothing about the petition. I did not know either Jeremy D. Lansman or Lorenzo W. Milam.

Soon the names of Lansman and Milam were simply dropped and the full-blown rumor emerged that Madalyn O'Hair, through a petition which she had filed with the FCC, was attempting to stop religious broadcasting of all kinds.

Your question reflects this lingering rumor, 8 years later, for you say that you hear that I am *currently* engaged in a campaign to ban all religious programming from television and radio.

The rumor spread like wildfire across the United States. By the summer of 1975, the FCC had received 750,000 letters protesting the activities of Madalyn O'Hair. Never before confronted with such a mass of mail on any issue, on August 1, 1975, it denied the petition of Messrs. Lansman and Milam. No one knew this. It is still unknown across the land. But meantime The American Atheist Center was being plagued with calls and I personally found out the addresses and telephone numbers of Lansman and Milam and called them. They were both religious young men.

The rumor continued, being especially productive of a letter-writing

campaign to the FCC. By September 1, 1975, exactly one month after the FCC had denied the Lansman/Milam petition, it had received 1,000,000 letters. By March, 1976, in just six more months, the FCC had received 3,000,000 letters. Under certain laws, it was required to keep this mail for one year and the storage became a problem. At the time that this one year expired, mail was being received at the rate of 6,000 letters a day. And, over 4,000,000 needed to be destroyed when that became legally possible. By the end of December, 1976, the letters had reached 7,000 a day, only to grow to 7,500 a day by February of 1977. By April of the same year, 5,500,000 letters had been received.

I personally did everything I could do to stop the rumor since the FCC was expending tax money for the hiring of a staff just to answer telephone calls and telegrams, in addition to the extra persons who had been put on the payroll to handle the letters. Nothing helped, and by May, 1978, the FCC was receiving 13,000 letters a day. The news media and the United States government could easily have stopped this rumor, as could have the religious community. Instead the various religious groups vied one with the other to berate me and demand that more and more letters be dumped on the FCC. The Veterans of Foreign Wars, the D.A.R. — that is, the Daughters of the American Revolution — the Knights of Columbus, the American Legion, everyone joined in the baying wolf pack to attack Madalyn O'Hair. By the end of 1978 — 7,000,000 letters had been received by the FCC. Telephone calls, congressional inquiries, and telegrams were all in addition to this. And this does not take into account the activity over the alleged petition in offices of federal and state congresses, in newspapers, magazines, on radio and television call-in programs.

By January, 1980, there had been 12,000,000 letters received and the all-time peak had been registered at 60,000 in one day. The FCC had to go to the U.S. Congress and ask for an appropriation of one-quarter million dollars to help cope with the flood. At the beginning of 1982 the count was up to 13,000,000 letters and the rumor was seven years old.

I guess you have, indeed, heard that Madalyn O'Hair has been engaged in a campaign to ban all religious programming from television and radio. I would be surprised if you had not heard that rumor.

The important outcome of all of this is that the religious community used those letters, which they had incited by a calculated lie, to bring pressure upon the FCC to permit them to have unlimited access to the media. And, the religious won their point in this vicious campaign. We are inflicted with religion on radio and television every time we turn on either instrument. I am convinced that it was a theopolitical plot from

beginning to end.

The religions of the United States are unprincipled, calculating, schemers for power. This was fully revealed in this campaign which used me for the end purpose of winning excessive airtime.

The Atheists of the world have been champions of free speech from time immemorial. The reason is obvious. They wanted to be able, freely, to discuss and to criticize the basic principles of religion.

Just as other Atheists in all ages of history have been foremost in this area of human concern, so have I fought for freedom of speech. It is an old, old trick to charge the person who labors for an objective to be the enemy of that objective. Some of the most famous plays have been predicated on this phenomenon, such as Henrik Ibsen's (Norwegian poet and dramatist, 1828-1906) play, *An Enemy of The People*, written in 1882.

S: *Since you make so many refereance [sic] to the constitution [sic] are you basing your thoughts on the constitution [sic] or you [sic] Atheism [sic] beliefs?*

A: I have failed absolutely tonight to get across to you just one idea: Atheists have no belief systems. If I repeat this in every answer to every query, it may come through to you.

I am a student of history and I am a lawyer. I have both my LL.B. (bachelor of law) and my J.D. (doctor of jurisprudence). The Constitution represents to me the legitimized principles upon which the founding fathers premised our nation. They had ideas about government and politics, and they laid it all out for everyone to read and argue about. Constitutional conventions were called in every state to ratify the political document: the Constitution of the United States. It was a legally binding one upon those persons represented by the signatories thereto and those who confirmed it as being acceptable to the states which cared to affiliate themselves together to form a nation. Of course, I have great intellectual respect for that document. As an Anarchist I realize that no prior generation can bind me, legally. I adhere to the Constitution since the basic principles enumerated therein appear to be a good format on which to premise our political state.

In addition, I am attempting to define and delimit the body of thought which is made up of ideas concerned with Atheism. I reach back to Atheists in other countries, in other times to see what they thought and felt. I gather this material systematically and preserve it and index it so that it is accessible to other scholars. This is all housed in The American

Atheist Center. (See the Preface to this book.)

In my research I am always surprised to find that there are now and have been universal ideas which have been the underpinning of Atheist thought in all ages and in all countries, just as there have been good basic geopolitical ideas.

At one point the Atheists were called freethinkers and incipient Atheism was called "free thought." It was designated thus because its professors felt that they had the right to have their minds freed from any restrictions, able to roam throughout human knowledge and to eclectically pick that which was right and good for humankind.

This is our heritage and all we need to do now is to expand those horizons which we seek to explore. Nothing is sacrosanct to the Atheist mind. Everything can be examined. Everything can be questioned. Everything can be tested by objective criteria. Anything that cannot measure up, anything which succumbs before an onslaught of questions, should not be tolerated by the human mind.

We must be free of all dogmas, all belief systems, constantly testing, seeking to know, reevaluating every scrap of human knowledge. That is where I am.

I am sorry that so many of you young people here tonight are so many centuries behind me, when I am so old. Radicals are supposed to be young and fiery. I come here, instead, with my grey head, and it is I — the old one — who must plead with you — the young ones — to begin an exercise unfamiliar to you: *Start to use your minds*. What in the hell do you think you have them for?

S: *Could you please explain your connection of the arms race with religion. The Russians are atheists and they spend 2X as much of their G.N.P. on defense.*

A: Oh, dear! The question reveals your lack of information concerned with recent history. It was the United States which developed and used the first atomic bombs for warfare. A-bombs were dropped on the cities of both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, both in Japan. The bombs were not dropped on the blue-eyed, blond Germans of Lutheran and Roman Catholic persuasion, or even on our black-eyed, olive-skinned Italian enemies who were overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. Those bombs were dropped on the "dirty-little-slant-eyed-Japs," who engaged in emperor worship and practiced heathen religions.

And, the bombs were dropped to be a clear and compelling notification to the Communists then in a revolutionary war in China and the

Communist government of the U.S.S.R. that we had the bombs and we would use them. To make that clear: the U.S. was the first nation to create atom bombs, use them in a war, and use the threat of using them in atomic diplomacy.

But that was not enough. In order to "contain" the threat of Communism, the United States began the arms race in 1945, immediately upon the termination of the war. It is the United States which has led in maintaining a world-wide network of military alliances and bases, military assistance to other countries, and military sales. The United States has introduced every major new weapon system, in the strategic field, since World War II. The United States has been the initiator and the leader of the arms race.

Remember that the U.S.S.R. was decimated by the Second World War. Over 20,000,000 of its people were killed. Many major cities were completely destroyed. There was no way it could compete with the United States when neither our mainland nor the continental mass of the Americas had been touched by so much as a firecracker during the war.

The United States and its military allies have ringed Russia with intermediate-range ballistic missile silos. They proliferate in Spain, France, Germany, Italy, England, Turkey, Greece, Iraq, Japan, and the Philippines. Would the United States permit the U.S.S.R. to put missile silos in Mexico, in Canada? What happened in Cuba which almost brought the world to a nuclear war? The U.S.S.R. was demanding that we withdraw silos in Turkey or it would place the same in Cuba. Actually, even in the hysteria of that incident, the trade-off was made.

The U.S.S.R. has something to fear from militarist America. The Soviet needs and wants peace to continue the rebuilding of its nation and the manufacture of consumer goods for its people. It keeps up a guard because it has much to fear. Our G.N.P. is so great that a smaller percentage of it counts out to more dollars than the Soviet rubles spent on defense. Since the Soviet G.N.P. is smaller, naturally, trying to match the United States it uses a larger percentage. The statistical game you play is a distorted one.

The United States has deliberately assumed a posture in the world of being the "capitalist Christian good guys" against the "communist Atheist bad guys." In all of the posturing, which is mostly religious and militaristic, the United States has paced the arms race. Its Christian fundamentalist leaders have panted after a possible armageddon so that in one fell swoop there can be 3+ billion crisply fried souls wafted to heaven to meet Jesus. That scenario is sickening.

S: *the [sic] examples you give of "Christians" have not been Christians. Don't you understand that a true Christian (at least by a* ***Christians*** *[sic] point of view) is NOT prejudiced, hypocritacal [sic] etc.? You are stereotyping what some people call Christians. There* ***are*** *people, Christians even, who honestly try to do what is good and right, even by your standards.*

A: Christians are what history has revealed them to be and what their churches and their theology claim them to be. Any dispassionate and objective analysis reveals a very sorry picture. Therefore some persons who include themselves within the appellation of "Christian" attempt to repudiate that part of both history, theory, and practice of Christianity which is consistently and overtly bad. Your question indicates that you are one of these who desire to put a disclaimer on that part of Christianity which you cannot, in good conscience, countenance.

Unfortunately for you, if you opt for Christianity, you cannot cut out that part of it which you accept and release yourself from the obligation of the whole — especially its history and current general practices. This game plan, in which you desire to participate, has been demonstrated throughout history. Martin Luther forswore a great part of the practice of the Roman Catholic Church and formed a new group which was called after his name, the Lutherans. But, from that came another break-off and another and another and another until we now have at the last count over 500 different Christian denominations. What none of them realize is that the fundamental principles are rotten. No matter what part they take, or what part they leave, there is still so much more to scrape out which is antithetical to humankind that new groups will be forming forever.

You want to do this now in your own behalf tonight. But all Christians, and you included, are still attempting to save what you conceive to be a good core.

There is no good core. That's the problem.

The charge of "stereotyping" of Christians is often thrown at those who have made a study of your belief system. Conversely, stereotype me as an Atheist. I don't care. In fact, I love it. Stereotype me as a woman. Of course, I am. Stereotype me as a lawyer. Your problem is that you recognize that which you embrace is not all it is pretended to be. Hence, you do not care to be associated with it, totally. You want to pick and choose fragments which you put together in an esoteric individual philosophy which you alone can define or control. There can be no understanding in the human community unless we can recognize

"idea groups." If it is necessary for each of the 218 million Americans to have unique and separate criteria for evaluating their basic Christian precepts, then there will never be any hope of communication.

It's trite, but you want to have your cake (your uniqueness) and you want to eat it too (to be known as a Christian).

I can't help you in your dilemma.

S: *There* ***is*** *a lot of good that could be done w/50 billion dollars per year (w/church taxation). However, the church as a whole spends I'm sure that much money on food and clothing for the needy, medical care for the underprivileged, etc. Without spending tax dollars for public labor to do it with. [sic] Isn't this a positive factor?*

A: Ah, but you are so wrong. The United States government has attempted to make studies of church spending on welfare for the churches' own. I have already spoken to that. Most churches do not even get beyond 1½% to 2% of their "take" for this exercise. The maximum amount ever recorded was 7%. And, their help is always sectarian, *i.e.*, to their own. In addition, however, each denomination accepts the largess of government in operating their so-called social services and that largess is great.

Recently, Reagan announced that he was going to cut back money given to social services and out of that has come some figures which are amazing even to me when I have kept a close watch on government financing of religious programs. For instance, the National Council of Churches immediately screamed out that its budget would be cut by $6,000,000. I want to know why it had $6 million of government money to begin.

In these recent disclosures I now find that in 1980, the Federal Government spent $151 billion on activities related to the work of non-profit organizations. That is shorthand to say "religious organizations." For example, a church-sponsored community garden program in Hartford will be decimated. If it was "church-sponsored," why does it rely on tax money? A community garden development program does not need church sponsorship. The Episcopal diocese of New York says that the federal money cut will have a disastrous effect on its programs providing legal aid, health care, employment, and dissemination of information on child nutrition. What the hell was a church doing this for in the first place? A professionally-staffed, secular organization to give such aid across sectarian lines is needed — not an Episcopal diocese helping Episcopalians. An evangelizing church works among migrant

farm labors in Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, and the taxpayers foot the bill. Why? The Roman Catholic archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey, will lose half of its federal funding for its "Catholic Community Service." That is $3,000,000. But why is the Catholic Community Service receiving $6,000,000 a year in the first place? The figure that I have had of $50 billion a year going to churches is much too low. And, the churches put in little or nothing. They use the vehicle of "control of services" to proselytize for their faith.

Your question was erroneous in that it assumed that the churches spent money on food and clothing for the needy and medical care for the underprivileged. The churches do no such thing. You can disabuse yourself of this fallacy.

S: *Madalyn, I love you.*

A: There are two ways to take this comment, too. It can come from either an Atheist or a Christian.

Let me first turn off the Atheist. It is absolutely impossible to love someone without knowing them. I admired Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. To understand and appreciate their lives and works is thrilling to me. But, I could not love them. I never knew them. Even today, there are persons in public life whom I admire, have even met, exchanged correspondence with them. I know what their ideological viewpoint is, but I don't love them. I love my parents, my children, my close friends, and my dogs. I love those persons with whom I am in relationship and I think that these are the only ones I can love. So, if you are an Atheist saying "I love you," I must say to you that you really can't. If you will use the ideas which I have presented here tonight to inspect them by challenge, verify them, and then work with them, then I have fulfilled my task tonight.

Now, if it is a Christian making this comment, the Christians turn me off with their "love" assertions. This is particularly because I feel that, inherently, they are damn liars. The words come easily to their lips. They can look skyward and say, "I love you, Jesus," much too easily for my tastes. And, when it came to a showdown, it was the love-filled Christians who piled the fagots under the Atheist right before they started the fire. I trust Christians as far as I can throw Alaska. When a Christian comes up to the podium after a speech and grabs my hand after a speech and grabs my hand and says "I love you," frankly, I cringe.

So, one way or another, I prefer to keep at arm's length.

S: *How can you make a judgment on Mr. Reagan's term when it isn't finished and his goals can never be judged at this early time?*

A: All I need to do is measure his proposed solutions rationally. There is no big mystery about the underlying propositions on which he builds. He and his party have made them quite plain. We have seen them before in prior Republican administrations on a federal level and also on diverse state levels. We are well aware of Ronald Reagan's prior gubernatorial office in California and the effects of his ideas upon that state. Also, Mr. Reagan has had no difficulty with Congress during the last two years. He has a Republican Senate and a House of Representatives which has voted for every one of his proposals up to and through the time of my speech here tonight. He has also made appointments at cabinet level, the effects of which I, or anyone else, can see. His foreign policy, or lack thereof, is well known. Mr. Reagan's programs do not operate in a vacuum. There is an on-going political and economic life of the nation and the effects of his programs are seen everywhere. Are we to wait until his term is over to make any kind of evaluation of it? No, of course not. That exercise is for the historian, not the person who weighs and evaluates current politics.

Also, my remarks concerned with Mr. Reagan tonight had to do with his emphasis on Christian fundamentalism as a component of government and his propelling of the nation toward a war with an Atheist government. I did *not* go into a critique of his economic program. But, you are very defensive of that which I have purposefully not challenged since the organization for which I speak is not an economic or political one, but rather an educational one concerned primarily with state/church separation and the civil libertarian rights of American Atheists.

Therefore, an economic and political discussion this evening would be extraneous to the issues I was invited to discuss.

S: *Also Mr. Reagan's Economic Plan cannot be judged now because you cannot stop 50 years of inflation and federal spending in 2 years.*

A: I am unaware that there have been 50 years of inflation and federal spending. Excuse me if I am wrong, but were not Eisenhower and Nixon and Ford all Republicans? Did they not sit in the White House for over 18 out of the last 30 years? How many states in the union have had Republican governors? Weren't all the cabinet posts staffed with Republicans in those 18 years? How have the appointments to the federal judiciary gone in that time? Were all the Republicans dead

during the terms of Kennedy and Carter? My memory recalls that both of those presidents had lively opposition. The Republican party has been an active participant in government since the time of Abraham Lincoln. We don't have unilateral Democratic government in times of Democratic ascendancy at all.

Reagan knew full well that he was running for a four-year term in office. He has stated, himself, that he is going to be a one-term president. If he did not think that he could effectuate the changes which he wanted to make in four years, why did he run for office? If it is going to take 50 more years, he is never going to make it. The man is in his 70s, you know.

S: *You claim that we push Religion on you, I claim you're pushing you're [sic] religion on* ***me****! (You do have a religion of worshipping nothing!)*

A: I have infinite patience and will repeat as I need to do so in order to give you an understanding. I don't claim that Christians push their religion on everyone; that is demonstrated in our culture. It is implied in your question. Religion is in the cinema, in the theater — I mean by that the legitimate stage, on radio, on television, in newspapers, in books, in magazines and/or journals. It intrudes into our government, into our social groups. Churches assault our neighborhoods. The music of the day is contaminated with religion. From all sides it moves in on us, incessantly. It is not possible to go through a day of one's life without there being some reinforcement of religious ideology laid on one. In any important event of one's life, religion is standing by to take over the event: birth, marriage, death. In fact, your Jesus Christ demands that you shove your religion at everyone. Matthew 28:19, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; 28:20, "*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:* and lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world."

The essence of Christianity is its intolerance. The first commandment of your god is "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Christians cannot live with other ideas. They are forced to convert all persons to their belief system. Any person staying outside of it is a threat to all of them inside the belief system because that person, who is outside, illustrates that your god has failed to bring at least one person to him. Therefore he is *not* an all-seeing, all-knowing, all-understanding, all-benevolent, all-powerful god. If he were that, he could induce *all* to

"come unto him."

It is impossible for those of you who are caught in that trap to understand that others do not have such belief systems and do not live inside mental cages. Therefore you scream out to us that our position is one of religion also, that we have belief systems as do you. What you are trying to do is, by definition, include us in your insanity. You define the positions and attitudes, opinions and ideas that we have as "a religion" because your thinking is so strictured that it is impossible for you to understand the concept of a "free mind," *i.e.*, one without religious enchainment.

Atheism has none of the attributes of a religion, something which I have clearly analyzed for you tonight. (See pages 49-50 for a generic definition of religion.) We have no god above and beyond nature, no breach of natural laws by such a god to demonstrate that he exists, no method of communication between such an entity and ourselves, no elaborate reward and punishment system such as heaven or hell for being in accord with that god's dictates. There is not one element needed for religion existing anywhere in Atheism.

Therefore, you charge that our religion is the worshipping of "nothing." But, in fact, this is what the Christian does: worships nothing. An unseen, unknown, unhearing, unresponding entity which you call god is supplicated by you daily with no response. Nothing is there — but you worship it. Nothing hears you — but you address communication to it. Nothing responds — but you hear some message in the void. Nothing ever happens — but you rationalize that "something" occurs somewhere, perhaps in one's "heart." It is an incredible game that you play.

We Atheists insist, only, that you do *not* include us in your credulity game.

S: *Why are you trying to get religious programs off the radios and TV's [sic]?? Some people* ***depend*** *on that for their time of worship! If you don't like it turn it off — but we have the RIGHT to listen if we so choose! You should NOT be allowed to deprive me of my freedoms!*

A: I have already explained that I am in no way associated with any effort to inhibit the broadcasting of religion on the airways and I base my lack of activity in this direction on the need to protect freedom of speech.

However, I want to talk about the deprivation of freedoms. Since the

inception of our nation it has been impossible for an Atheist to obtain any forum for an expression of opinion. Publishing houses have refused to publish our books, and when they were privately published, bookstores refused to sell them. Libraries refused to purchase them and, when received as gifts, refused to either shelve or display them. The U.S. mails refused to carry the books in the mails. The U.S. Customs refused to permit the import of Atheist books from other nations. Printers would not handle Atheist journals and the same problems with mailing, distributing, and selling them occurred as with books. Atheists were consistently refused time on radio in the United States. No cinema ever exalted our position and the Atheist was always cast as the villain. No stage play ever carried an Atheist theme. When television developed there was a flat refusal to permit any Atheist presentation on it. Newspapers refused our advertisements, as did every magazine or journal. We have even been refused space on billboards. No Atheist songs have been openly permitted. We could not even record one to distribute ourselves, one to the other. No courses in Atheism are permitted in any schools. Even a discussion of Atheism was precluded by the blasphemy laws throughout our land. Atheists have been barred from office or public trust in many states by constitutional provision. Even until recent years this prohibition remained in seven of our states: Arkansas, Texas, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Pennsylvania. It has only been in the last six years that American Atheists has won protracted and costly federal court cases in North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Mississippi to forbid this exclusionary practice. We have been refused rental of auditoriums or meeting rooms. Banks have refused to handle our accounts. We have been driven from parks or outdoor meeting places when we have tried to assemble there.

All of this has been caused because all persons involved have known that if any kind of friendship or recognition is offered to an Atheist or an Atheist group, the religious community would immediately take reprisals and sanctions against those showing the least bit of humanitarian feeling. The reprisals and sanctions have always been massive, from brute force to psychological harrassment. Religion has remained in power only because of its suppressive brutality.

Your "freedom" has always depended upon our subjugation. It has always demanded the complete deprivation of freedom for Atheists. Now that after 35,000 years of human civilization the Atheist finally dares to speak out at a time and place where you cannot kill or jail him immediately, you have the temerity to state that his tiny outreach for

freedom of speech impinges on your total control of the culture. You spread massive lies about the Atheist — such as the lie of the Lansman-Milam Petition before the FCC. And, you will not learn even when confronted with your adamant, unyielding, brutish stance.

Well, the Atheist defies you. You have done the worst that you can do to us in the past. In the present we stand up to you. The future belongs to us — and we are in the process of seizing it.

S: *Ma'am what specific suggestions do you have for making the government perfectly fair and just for everyone?*

A: There is a minimum wage in this nation, allegedly. Actually, the standards of minimum wage are violated constantly by every conceivable kind of legal trickery. We need to make that minimum an absolute, and in addition I think that we must put a ceiling on both wages, income, and ownership. When all of society has a fairly narrow margin of economic differences, then some measure of equality can be reached. Apparently some measure of difference is needed to provide incentives, but not so great as now. The laurel awarded in the Greek athletic Olympic contests was greatly prized and equivalent prestigious acknowledgments could be utilized now. (An example is the Nobel prize.)

Clarence Darrow, perhaps the most famous criminal attorney the nation ever had, once said, "I have never seen a millionaire go to the electric chair." And that is true. With the amassing of wealth has come the building of power and the abuse of it. In the United States some people are more equal than others. Those with great wealth, and consequently with great power, do not walk to the same drummer as does the common man. The inequality comes from that.

If there were not a small class of rich and powerful, the theory of "equal justice under law" would have some chance of equal application. But as long as this class is above the ethical base laid for the populace at large, just so long will we have continued exploitation, abuse, misappropriation of the largess of our productive capacity.

I also am convinced that we must abandon our military build-up and militaristic aspirations. It is, simply, necessary to live at peace with all of the countries of the world. That money should be used to establish free health, education, and welfare benefits for our people on the premise that people are a natural resource of any human society and that their needs in these three categories must be met by the concerted efforts of all.

S: *I wish you joy and peace of mind in your life. Thanks for making us think.*

A: An Atheist salute is: "Good health be with you," or alternately, "Take care!" We feel that a healthy mind, in a healthy body, can't be beat — and from this flows a certain joy of living, peace of mind, and a desire to participate in those activities which aid human, animal, and other life as well as the world, generally.

I thank you.

Also, we are quite well pleased that the very Atheistic phrase, "Have a nice day" has replaced the old "Goodbye" which is a contraction for "God be with ye."

S: *How much money do you make?*

A: None at all. I donate all my time to The American Atheist Center. When there is payment for a lecture, such as this one tonight, I instruct the group which has asked me to appear to make the check out to The American Atheist Center for its continued operation.

S: *You said in your speech "Go to Hell." How can someone "go to hell" if there is no heaven or hell? (no God)*

A: Please refer to your notes if you took any. I do not use the phrase "Go to hell." In my discussion of Christian morality I noted that you have a supposed incentive for ethical behavior in that you either act in conformity with Christian precepts or you "go to hell," which threat hangs over you constantly. Since there is this threat which generates fear in you, you do not "choose" the ethical way but rather you are saving (you think) your own skin, out of fear, from a threat quite personal to you in your belief in a continuation of life after death. That, I pointed out, is a despicable basis for your so-called "moral" behavior.

I do not understand why you have difficulty in my use of *your* terminology. You don't understand Atheist terminology, so what else can I do but use those referents which are in your own thought system? Over and over again tonight it has been demonstrated that you do not understand, for example, the Atheist freedom from a "belief system." You do not understand the distinction we make between ethics and morality. I must reach out to you because you are incapable of reaching out to me, an Atheist.

S: *If you're so concerned about the "slums in Chicago" or the state of New York, then why should we plunge America into more financial burdens by feeding Africa or India. Shouldn't we spend that money on American citizens? Why should we Americans have that burden?*

A: It has been apparent to me, in long years of lecturing, that audiences, particularly students, hear with a fragmented ear. I mean that over and over again I see a student group disassociate statements from a lecture, fail to see relationships. Therefore, my speeches and lectures have become progressively more explanatory and explicit, often bordering on the pedantic. I do not underestimate the capacity of a held position to interfere with the ability of a student to hear that which I want to transmit.

I have the patience of the mythical Job. I will repeat. Sooner or later you must hear what I am saying.

The thrust of your question is a statement of "America First" which is equivalent to another position — that of "first to the Christians." This is a cry of intolerance to the world. That was a banner cry of the Crusades which swept outside of Europe and the Inquisition which swept inside of Europe. It began with the concept of the Jews being "god's chosen people." Religious games people play are disguised in many ways, but the underlying principle is always the same.

What I had to say to you, and I repeat it again now, is that the world is the nest of humankind. We should start *now* to survey it as a whole. We should say that there are natural resources of coal here, fish there, copper deposits yonder, great natural pastoral and grazing lands here, grain belt land there. Surveying all of this — as a world system — we must recognize that time stretches beyond us forever, that our children, grandchildren, and progeny need the wherewithal for life. We must conserve it for them while we use our share wisely today.

We should exchange these resources freely, within the constraints of the needs of humankind, animalkind, even flora and fauna, the earth, even the stone base on which that earth rests. We must deliberately find a new kind of administrative body, or bodies, which will be the management end of the local groups, with an international coordinating body of peace and friendship. There are problems in all nations which must be solved by an overview of *what is good for the planet*, not what is good for General Motors, or good for the United States.

What I pointed out is that there is grain enough *now* to feed the world, while whole areas of Africa and India starve. This is not rational behavior. If we cannot alleviate hunger in those areas, why should Americans

have the burden of sending $2 billion a year to Israel for its military use, which it uses to destroy the city of Beirut, to decimate the nation of Lebanon? An expenditure of $2 billion a year in a humanitarian outreach is more to be commended than the bolstering of Zionism.

Why are we building nuclear and conventional weaponry worth $200 billion? Do you really think that the U.S.S.R. is going to attack the United States? Where would they land? In our gulf city of Galveston? Would they invade New Jersey? Could they fling the Red Army across the nation? We have a population of 220,000,000. How would we be subdued? Would they drop paratroopers on Chicago? If the U.S.S.R. cannot even establish order in Afghanistan, what can it do in New York City? What idiotic ideas! What would the American people be doing while "the Reds" took over Houston? How would they manage if Ma Bell went on strike? The idea is naive, absurd.

Have you not read history?

We can do both of the jobs you have mentioned. Our rich farmland can almost feed the world. It must be joined in its productive capacity by bringing other lands in other rich natural areas into the same kind of productive ability. In addition, we must face the problems of our own nation. Please tell me why we don't use our army engineering corps to clean up our rivers and our great lakes? What is to prevent the government from going to every manufacturing company which is dumping into those fresh water reserves and saying to them: "Your despoiling of our water supply cannot be tolerated. This is a natural resource. Therefore, our corps of Army engineers will find solutions for you to your problems of a need to dump. We will make your waste non-toxic. We will find a disposal system for you so that you can continue to manufacture your product and create employment and consumer products. The cost of this will be borne by the government, the taxpayer, because our water supply is precious to us all."

That is a much saner approach than spending $200 billion for war — or directing $50 billion a year toward the churches.

Today, not tomorrow — but today, we have the communication outreach, the educated personnel, the fast transportation, the educational system, the technology, the science, the expertise to solve every one of our problems. Today, we could reach out and stop the drug traffic in our nation. The armed forces could be used for that also. The corps of engineers could rebuild our slums — Watts, today, still lies in a shambles.

We are precluded from going about our business by a stata of irrational thought which reaches out and corrupts our ability to think

clearly and rationally. And, each time that one inspects that irrational thought system, at the core of it one finds religious ideas. Your Jesus exhorts you to take no thought of tomorrow. Who, then, will, if you do not? Your Jesus compels you to look at the condition of your soul instead of the condition of your nation and the people in it. Your Jesus proclaims that your only concern is to prepare yourself for your everlasting life after death. We Atheists ask you to concern yourself with life NOW.

You are a part of humankind and anything anywhere which degrades humankind degrades you because you are a part of the whole. And, it is time that you should think in those terms.

S: *Mrs. O'Hare [sic] If you know who and what you are and where you're going (when you die). Where did you come from?*

A: My mother and father were fucking one day — and I am the product of that.

I am constrained to give such answers because I feel keenly that you should be able to at least know what your question is. It is not, "Mrs. O'Hair, whence did you come?" but rather the lesser question of "How was life derived?" or the larger question of "What is the universe and whence was that derived?"

I have answered both of those questions already here tonight. (1) The inorganic gave rise to the organic. In many laboratories over the world this reaction is being reproduced in a variety of ways. There is much literature on it. I refer you to any elementary biochemical text. (2) We as yet have no ability to even define the "universe." Science, particularly the fields of astronomy, physics, astrophysics, and space science, are yet gathering data. Currently we deal only with theories.

But the consequences of your position as a Christian immediately move you into a "belief set" so that you think in terms of theological cosmology. Your *raison d'etre*, that which guides your life, is your desire to come into conformity with the idea that god created this universe specifically for you to live in it, in the flesh, in order to be able to shed that flesh and rejoin your god in the cosmos. The consequences of the Atheist viewpoint is an appreciation that life is worth living here and now, that it must be enriched for everyone, that it is important to use our individual potentials, to maximize our abilities, to enjoy this small span of time which we have, while we assist in ameliorating the human condition.

The Christian attitude is a negation of life; the Atheist attitude is an affirmation of it.

S: *You said that a person should have the right to either believe or not believe. I've noticed that your son has chosen to believe in God.*

A: One could hardly fail to notice his assault upon the media to gain access and to be heard.

S: *If you believe a person's right to believe anything he/she believes why are you and your son not on terms respecting each other's preference toward religion?*

A: You are unaware of what the situation is. My son feels that he can air his postured alleged grievances in public. He's a big boy now. If he wants to do that, he can do it. My ethical standards are different. I will not, repeat not, review for you, or for the public, my private life.

However, your question has another underlying premise to which I can speak. You stated that it is your understanding that the Atheist position is that "a person should have the right to either believe or not believe." I presume that the reference is to the god idea, or to religion. There are two replies to that from our organization as representing Atheists and those two replies I personally share with the organization. Our government is predicated on the Constitution of the United States and I respect the principles of that instrument. I do not have the same kind of respect for our legal system which has standards inferior to the broad constitutional principles, especially those contained in the Bill of Rights. I see that Bill of Rights as positing that each person has what is called "freedom of conscience." Therefore, the organization and I — personally — affirm that each person should have a right to choose a "belief system" which will serve as a basis for actions in society, reflecting their "freedom of conscience."

This nation is, after all, a body politic. There must be basic premises on which it is posited and those must be recognized and affirmed by the citizenry. If we think that these are erroneous, we should attempt by suasion, in the free market place of ideas, to convince the populace that some of these premises must be changed. Our arguments must be convincing and based on verifiable facts. American Atheists endorse our founding principles.

Over the years, omissions and changes have been made in some of those principles so that instead of the first "Ten Amendments" passed in order to ratify the Constitution, we now have twenty-six amendments to it.

The Atheists are also involved in the area of ideas. These are not

governed by any laws, constitutions, or states. By and large the idea arena is the place to be. Once something has been hammered out by scientific investigation, reason, and logic, one moves to the political field to effectuate those ideas or basic principles. Ideally, they should be put into practice based on their utilitarian service to humankind, to — a phrase I use often — ameliorate the human condition, *i.e.*, make it just a little easier to have the wherewithal for life.

In this idea arena where there is constant reevaluation, logical scrutiny, changes because of review of massive data, it is apparent that some ideas are "bad." That is, those ideas have redounded against the human community, against nature, against natural laws. Some ideas are inherently insane. Let me give you a few of these, and immediately you will agree with me that they are insane ideas — just that and nothing more. There are five of them:

1) The first is the idea that differences of opinion can be settled by physical force. You can see why those who are fighting it out in the idea arena are concerned primarily with this one. If the body of the proponent of the idea is physically absurd, even to the point of death, that ultimate (death) destroys the idea. Physical force should not be a factor, but physical force has run the gamut from pugilism between two persons to nuclear wars between nations. All wars are a form of "force" settlement of opinion differences. Wife beating, child beating, torture, imprisonment, capital punishment are all forms of the application of physical force to the determination of the right or wrong of an opinion or idea.

It is obvious that the time has come now that we must eschew this resort to violence. Ideas must be accepted or rejected in relationship to their intrinsic merit and not based on coercive force which can be utilized to obtain acceptance of the idea. In fact, if force is at all necessary, it probably is an indication that the idea was so bad that it could not be maintained logically and resorting to force was necessary.

Although there are still adherents to the force theory, by and large more and more of the people of the earth are having an understanding that it was never really a good alternative and it is being abandoned.

2) The second is the idea that a unique individual can be judged in respect to his personality, his capabilities, and his intrinsic worth on the basis of the subdivision of race to which any *Homo sapiens* belongs. All red men are not inherently, by reason of their race, inferior or superior to all yellow men. All black men are not inherently, by reason of their race, inferior or superior to all white men. There is really no argument about this anymore. The intellectual community has accepted that this

never was a valid idea.

3) The same genre of idea was for a long time held concerned with women. That is, it was proposed and accepted that women were inherently inferior by reason of their sex. It was long felt that they had an inferior capacity for ideation: they could not think. This is now being challenged in Western nations and in the nations which have opted for Communism. Its main bastions are (a) in the Muslim world, (b) with the current Pope and in some elements of reactionary Roman Catholicism and (c) basic in the contentions of the Christian fundamentalists. Once again, the more knowledgeable world has abandoned this idea.

4) The idea of slavery is now accepted as being a repugnant one. Enforced servitude of one person to another, inflicted upon that person by the other, or by government, is no longer defensible as a viable life-style for any human.

Of course, there is slavery yet, often disguised but still functioning in our diverse national cultures. We still have economic slavery. Economic theorists can define many forms of this practice. The caste system in India which does not permit access has components of both slavery and "group inferiority." There are social forms of slavery in which certain types of marriages can be classed. Unfortunately, often children are held in bondage in families which deliberately program the children with anti-human ideas. An elaboration on this idea would call for several semesters of intensive study.

5) The idea that death is superior to life is another idea which is being repudiated. This is inextricably bound with the concept of soul and the merit of "soul" being superior to "body"; the concept of the more worthy incarnate, which must be released from the vulgar carnate flesh. This repudiation of the only thing we know — life — is shockingly insane. More and more persons begin to have a realization of this.

When one looks at these five great insane ideas which have plagued the human race, set it back in its development for thousands upon thousands of years, one is shocked to find the root of it all. That root is usually religion, in every age, in every country. Religion has been the inhibitor.

Now, I get to your question concerned with "a person should have the right to either believe or not believe." And, I come down firmly as an Atheist on the side of "NO, you do not have a right to be deliberately insane." When humankind was in its infancy, I can see how some of these ideas developed, even how and when as well as where and when. But we have a span of history to teach us lessons. We have the methodology now with which we can test ideas: the scientific method.

We have the ability to collect data and study it. There is no excuse, anymore, for humankind to cling to Precambrian ideas which cannot assist them in their adjustments to living now. We must attack these insane ideas, in the public arena, and force them to show a cause for their continued existence or retreat from civilization. We must not hesitate to challenge them in the open marketplace of ideas. If they can best us logically, we should lose. But, my idea is that they will succumb before an intellectual attack. They should be retired. They are dangerous, pernicious. We are better to be free of them.

Well over a hundred years ago, an English Atheist, Charles Bradlaugh, wrote a short editorial which appeared in his Atheist journal called the *Investigator*, on November 1, 1858. I often use it as a basis for a speech. Since it is not lengthy, I will read it to you. It is titled "Aggressive Atheism."

> We are investigators, and our policy is to ascertain facts and present them to our readers in clear and distinct language. If we find a mind bound round with creeds and Bibles, we will select a sharp knife to cut the bonds; if we find men prostrating themselves, without inquiry, before idols, our policy is iconoclastic — we will destroy those idols. If we find a rock in our path, we will break it; but we will not quarrel with our brother who deems his proper work to be that of polishing the fragments. We believe all the religions of the world are founded on error, in the ignorance of natural causes and material conditions, and we deem it our duty to endeavor to expose their falsity. Our policy is therefore aggressive. We are, at present, of opinion that there is much to do in the mere clod-crushing sphere, in uprooting "upas" trees (moraceous trees with poisonous milky sap), hewing down creed-erected barriers between man and man and generally in negating the influence of the priest. Our policy is of humble character; we are content to be axebearers and pioneers, cutting down this obstacle and clearing away that. We respect the sower who delights in the positive work of scattering seed on the ground, but we fear that the weeds destroy much of the fruit of his labors. . . .
>
> There is no middle ground between theism and Atheism. The genuineness and authenticity of the scriptures are questions relevant to secularism (worldly concerns). It is as necessary for the secularist to destroy Bible influences as for the farmer to endeavor to eradicate the chickweed from his clover field. We appeal to those who think our work fairly done to aid us in our labors; to those who will not work with us we simply say, do not hinder us.

Our only wish and purpose is to make men happy, and this is because in so doing we increase our own happiness. The secret of true happiness and wisdom lies in the consciousness that you are working to the fullest of your ability to make your fellows and yourself happy and wise. Man can never be happy until he is free; free in body and in mind; free in thought and in utterance; from crowns and creeds, from priest, from king; free from the cramping customs created by the influences surrounding him, and which have taught him to bow to a lord and frown upon a beggar. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity! That true liberty which infringes not the freedom of my brother; that equality which recognizes no nobleman but the men of noble thoughts and noble deeds; that fraternity which links the weak arm-in-arm with the strong, and, teaching humankind that union is strength, compels them to fraternize, and links them together in that true brotherhood for which we strive.

S: *Why must you use curse words to get your points across? Insecurity?*

A: I recognize no restraints on language at all. But, I can assure you that I have never used a "curse" word in my life. I refer you to any religious, or ordinary, dictionary to affirm this. There you will find that a "curse" word is a prayer or invocation to god for harm or injury to come upon someone. You can bet your very life that I would never supplicate god to do harm or injury, since I know that 1) there is no such an animal as a god and 2) that it would be impossible for such a conjured entity to visit harm on another in my behalf.

S: *How do you feel about providing a moment of silence in the schools for students to use as they please?*

A: Our children are not so insensitive that they do not know that the current fight is specifically over prayers. They read newspapers, hear radio, and see television. They are privy to conversations in the home and know, almost by some magic osmosis, what is in the minds of the school administrators. They know that this is a thinly disguised intrusion of the nose of the camel (prayer) under the edge of the tent (public schools). It does a disservice to the religious idea of prayer that it must be snuck in by a surreptitious route. It is an affront to the non-prayer in that he has an enforced silence so that someone else may pray. Why not

have one minute set aside and if you want to do a tamborine exercise, you do it — while the religious ones pray? That would never be countenanced because it would interfere with their prayer. Your right NOT to be forced into silence to accommodate the person who prays is not considered. This is very inequitable and puts a premium on the praying child's rights in opposition to yours.

S: *My high school used this method and I used it to do my homework while the girl next to me silently said a prayer. No problem!*

A: Of course, you mask the fact that you were insulted by a statement that depicts a highly improbable situation. If there was one minute of silence, you could not even get your book open to your assignment in one minute. In addition, you saw those bowed heads around you and knew that you were the Pythias (a legendary Greek who was nearly executed while standing as a voluntary hostage for his condemned friend, Damon) in the room. To lick your wounds, you fliply say that it did not matter to you. It did, or you would not make up this little tale of "doing homework" in a minute.

S: *Why are you an Atheist? What promotes your thinking and inspired your decision?*

A: Oh, Mary, mother of Jesus, you have not heard a word I said tonight! I will leave with you, here, a copy of my book, *All The Questions You Ever Wanted To Ask American Atheists*, so that you may read and learn. I cannot inflict another repetition of Atheists' positions on all of the students assembled tonight. Those who were attentive deserve to hear other questions answered at this point.

S: *What evidence(s) or proof(s) do you have for your Atheistic theories and beliefs?*

A: I need to refer you to the answer I just gave to the previous question.

S: *Ms. O'Hair. If you are atheist [sic] as you profess, then it would be logical to assume that you have no faith in a god. With this correct assumption, how do you, as an atheist, attempt to understand the pluralistic characteristics of society?*

A: First, after fifty years of fighting as a feminist, I do object to the designation of "Ms." Please do not use it in addressing me.

Your logical assumption is correct. Since there is no god, I cannot have faith in one of the same.

Your question is how can I attempt to understand the pluralistic character of society. I will change that to what I think is your intent. Anyone can attempt anything including understanding. And, your question goes to religion. Therefore I change it to: How can you understand the religious pluralism of our nation?

I am not a daisy. You can accept that statement. However, I can study the daisy from seed to bloom to expiration as an entity. I can have a complete understanding of its cycle.

In the United States we have 350+ Protestant religions, 6 types of Judaism, 4 types of Buddhism, 6 types of Khrisna worship. All of these are built upon idea systems. I know the history and theology of the Methodists, the Episcopalians, the Lutherans, the Presbyterians, the Jews, the Muslims, and so on. The basic premises are clear-cut. One can follow the logic once the first premise is accepted as a working hypothesis. There is absolutely no difficulty in this.

What your question proposes, without stating it, is that there is a certain mystical or non-rational quality concerned with faith and that unless I can experience this I may not judge any of these religious idea sets. Do you know that is balderdash? You have no more mystic feeling than I do. That is a game you play, a blind behind which you can hide your irrational ideas. You say to me, "You do not have the capacity, the understanding, the feeling, which is needed to explore." Neither do you. You just pretend that you have, in order to offer up a shield for an idea which falls to its face under open inspection.

S: *Please explain why you think it is wrong to let a parent teach his child about religion.*

A: Religion harms children, adults, nations, cultures, and societies as a whole because the ideas are irrational, emphasize false values, and promote feelings of personal inadequacy and anxiety in persons indoctrinated into them. They are particularly pernicious for children.

A child should be permitted to grow free from restrictive and dehumanizing ideas, which are those of religion. Basically, religion is anti-life, anti-women, anti-peace, anti-sexuality, anti-reason, anti-science. And, *that* is a heavy load to lay on any child.

S: *Is it wrong for a parent to teach a child morals or anything? If not, what is the difference between the two?*

A: What is the difference between morals and anything? Let me skip that. It is wrong for a parent to frighten a child, or to teach the child that the child's actions can cause the child to burn in hell, lose a chance at afterlife, bring a punishment of god upon the child. There are better methods for the rearing and instruction of children than those posed by the Bible. There must be courses in child psychology in your school, and I exhort you to hit the books prescribed for those courses.

Q: *You don't believe in eternal life. Isn't that a little depressing?*

A: Isn't it a little depressing that you do? Can you imagine eternal existence without a mind and a capacity to think? With what ears will you hear? With what eyes will you see? With what mouth and lips and voice box will you speak? With what brain will you comprehend?

Never for one moment do you think of your continued life as being other than in your present form. You want to think that your personality, your body, your ideas, will be intact. You would be totally uninterested in being a speck of dust in the cosmos. *You want to be you.* That is what is so sad about the lie of eternal life. You are what is stored in your grey matter. When that rots after you die, all is gone. Your unique individual personality is no more. That is why it is so important to gather your rosebuds while you may. Life is for living. Get to the exercise.

Q: *How do you know how one feels when they pray to God when you don't pray?*

A: Ah, but I did, you see. And, as I really felt nothing then, so I know you feel nothing now. You are so busy composing words that you have no time to feel anything. If you did, the stubborn reality of life beating in you is all that you would feel.

Q: *Why do you only attack Reagan? Is he the only person in our government? Does he have total authority? What place does the congress do [sic]? Sleep? What about the voters?*

A: I feel rather foolish to give you this answer, for surely you have had some classes in civics, in government, in politics? The Republican party assembled a platform, the central emphasis of which was Reaganomics,

which was proposed to be an invention of Reagan in respect to an economic theory, with the help of his advisers. This was only a part of the Republican platform. On this platform, he won a majority in the Senate. The gap in the House was narrowed by the seating of additional Republican incumbents there. Reagan is the titular head of the party and he enunciates its expanding idea base as new situations arise in the country and in the world. He stands as the principal representative of this body of ideas.

Now, who am I supposed to criticize? The doorman at the White House? He certainly does not elucidate the policies or attempt to implement their enforcement. Reagan does. He is a symbol. He is an alleged leader.

I don't limit my comments to Reagan; I could go on for hours about James Watt, David Stockman, Jesse Helms, Strom Thurmond, Jeremiah Denton, Casper Weinberger, Donald Regan, Alexander Haig, Henry Kissinger, Barry Goldwater, Orrin Hatch, Robert Dole, John East, Paul Laxalt. Most of them are firmly rooted in religious fundamentalism in their appeal across the nation.

I also could go on for hours concerned with the Senate — not one member of which is not a millionaire. Our United States Congress does not represent "the people." It has always represented special interest groups. Surely, you are not so unsophisticated that you believe in fairy tales in addition to god? It is a scandal that every regulatory agency in the United States has seated in its main office a representative from the very industry which is supposed to be regulated. The graft, pay-offs, chicanery, deceits, trade-outs of our Congress are scandalous. They have been for over a hundred years. The old congressional scandals were simply little peeps in the door of the backroom of corruption; that corruption has never ended; the doors have simply been locked more securely against an outside glimpse. These men use certain ideas in which they wrap themselves, "Main Street, the flag, god, apple pie, and motherhood," to stay in power.

The idea of the voters of the United States running the country is ludicrous, of course. The theory of participatory democracy fails when there is no educated electorate. And, in the United States the voters do not have political acumen. This is scandalously so. Reagan was elected with less than a majority of registered voters turning out. Many voters can be bought for a beer. Our nation is almost totally illiterate concerned with politics. For whom did your mother vote in the last election and why? My mother voted for Kennedy in one election because he was "handsome." How many people in the last election voted against Carter

by voting for Reagan although they really did not want him either? How often has the choice of a candidate been dictated to you from the church pulpit? The Roman Catholic Church is notorious for such pulpit endorsements.

I don't believe that anyone over 8 years of age, in America, could ask a question like this. News concerned with all of these matters presses in upon you from all sides in our country. You cannot be without information in this area.

Q: *If you have no belief system, how can you believe in yourself?*

A: I demonstrate myself. All I need to do is step on the scales and there is proof positive that "I am." All Atheists accept objective reality and we are registered there.

Q: *Being a devout agnostic, what convictions do you hold that allows you to be an atheist?*

A: First, let us talk about agnosticism and agnostics, so everyone will know what this question is about.

Once again in words of Greek or Latin derivation, the letter *a* as a prefix is a privative, giving a negative thrust to the word. A-gnosis simply means against knowledge, or without knowledge. I'll get back to that.

The word was coined in 1869 by Sir Thomas Huxley and it has specific meaning, which has been retained from that time era until now.

Charles Bradlaugh was the first militant Atheist in the history of Western civilization. He was elected to the British parliament six times and each time that body refused to seat him because he was an Atheist. He would not swear his allegiance to queen and country, so help him "God." Everyone in England during this period of time knew Bradlaugh. He came to be famous all over the world. In his fight to obtain his seat in the House of Commons, he raised the issue of Atheism to not alone England, but the world. He sought allies as he could of every person in public life. The intellectual community contained at the time one Sir Thomas Huxley. Darwin's ideas had just been introduced and the House of Huxley had taken to their championing. So, naturally, Bradlaugh went to Thomas Huxley for help — believing that Huxley might be an Atheist. And, it was Huxley who coined the word agnostic in 1869 to keep from aligning himself with the hard-pressed Bradlaugh.

Huxley in his letters to the literate community of the time pointed out that he did not feel that salvation could be attained through gnosis, or

knowledge. Atheists do not know what "salvation" is or what Huxley meant by the term. But we do know that Huxley referred to the New Testament Biblical story of Acts 17:23, wherein Paul visited Athens and admonished the people for a statue he found there. He said, ". . . as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription 'to the unknown God'. . . ." And, Huxley believed that in the final analysis, the god idea had to be accepted on faith, not on reason. In that connection, he constantly *implied* two statements:

1) God is — and god is unknown.
2) God is — and god is unknowable.

When he was confronted in immediate debate by the clergy, he dwelt at great length on the minutiae of certain Biblical stories and said, in support of his agnosticism *of certain details* that the accuracy of the stories was (during his time) "unknowable," since the records were either contradictory or obscure. This was a sophisticated way of squirming away from making a judgment on a Biblical story, such as that of Jesus walking on the water.

Although his statements concerned with agnosticism were grand statements even acceptable to Atheists of that time and this, he refused to put them into application and hence took away from them any validity which they might have. For instance, in respect to the god idea itself, he chose not to engage directly in an analysis of it. From reading his writings, there is every indication that he accepted the fundamental principles of the Christian religion as detailed in the New Testament, and preferred only to argue about the superficial details.

Actually, agnosticism is very close to the religious dogma that the ways of god are unfathomable, that human reason is fallible, and that man requires a different, non-scientific path to the truth — such as faith. Agnostic followers have always been allies of the church. The false notion that the world is unknowable undermines science and reinforces theology. It inclines man to faith and induces humankind to trust religious doctrines. The church does not anathematize the agnostic and even the Roman Catholic Church will accept the agnostic in its fold.

Popularly, the word has been corrupted (just as the words *Atheist* and *Epicurean* have been corrupted) to mean to the man in the street, "I don't know whether there is a god or not." But an inspection of that sentence leads one into accepting the logic of Huxley.

In confrontation to the position of agnosticism, when questioned concerned with it at the Tenth Annual National American Atheist Convention, Dr. Albert Ellis, one of our nation's foremost psychologists, elaborated on Atheism and agnosticism. He noted that currently

there is a trend in all of science to state that there is only a "probability" concerned with natural laws and that scientists are not 100% certain of their grounds any more or at least at this time. They are *only* 99.999999% certain. They can *only* show that certain laws have been the same for 4½ billion years. He laughed and said, "For all *practical* purposes in your life, then, you can accept that natural laws 'may be true.' To premise your life on the very slim hope that they may not be true, is to act in an absurd and unproductive fashion." The odds against the god idea are in the same magnitude. Yet, the agnostic rejects the major for the minor premise of both time and percentage and says that he really cannot make a decision.

In addition, of course, during the course of recorded history, for a minimum of at least 10,000 years, the theologians have been attempting to "prove" their manufactured god(s). Five classic arguments have evolved. I won't go into them in detail tonight, since they are available to you in my booklet, *Why I Am An Atheist*, a copy of which I will leave for your library. They are:

1) The argument from one person's direct sensory experience with (a) god(s).

2) The argument of one person's intuition or mystical revealing (a) god(s).

3)The argument for second party faith acceptance of 1) and 2).

4) The argument that an authority reveals god, depending on A) the authority of an institution, such as a church or the state; on B) the authority of a book, such as the Bible, the Koran, the Veda, the Upanishads; or on C) the authority of an individual such as a prophet or a mystic.

5) Logical arguments, which are broken down into categories of A) the cosmological argument (the universe is ordered because a god willed it to be); B) the teleological argument (there is a design in nature which only a god could effectuate); C) the ontological argument (the existence of a god is implied by the idea of god); D) the moral argument (goodness flows from god); E) the pragmatic argument (does the god idea work for humankind?); F) the first cause argument (god willed the universe into existence out of nothing, thus "causing" it).

The Atheist position is that the traditionalist historical arguments for, and concepts of, god(s) are quite fallacious and that the notion of some "super power" is not now susceptible of proof by existing scientific methods or by the accumulation of knowledge presently accessible to humankind. Therefore the Atheist lives *as if* there is no god, no efficacy

in prayer, and no life after death, using these premises in practical day-to-day living. We are free from theism. We bet everything on this being accurate. The agnostic is gutless and prefers to keep one safe foot in the god camp.

The history of the argument between Atheists and agnostics is readily available. Huxley himself gives the story of how he coined the word, "agnostic" in his book *Science and Christian Tradition*. I happened to bring this book tonight since I thought that the question might again arise. Let me read several paragraphs to you from his essay, "Agnosticism," chapter VII in the book, noted as having been written in 1889.

> When I reached intellectual maturity and began to ask myself whether I was an atheist, a theist, or a pantheist; a materialist or an idealist; a Christian or a freethinker; I found that the more I learned and reflected, the less ready was the answer; until, at last, I came to the conclusion that I had neither art nor part with any of these denominations, except the last. The one thing in which most of these good people were agreed was the one thing in which I differed from them. They were quite sure they had attained a certain "gnosis," — had, more or less successfully, solved the problem of existence; while I was quite sure I had not, and had a pretty strong conviction that the problem was insoluble.
>
> That was my situation when I had the good fortune to find a place among the members of . . . the Metaphysicial [*sic*] Society . . . most of my colleages [*sic*] were *-ists* of one sort or another; and however kind and friendly they might be, I, the man without a rag of a label to cover himself with, could not fail to have some of the uneasy feelings which must have beset the historical fox when, after leaving the trap in which his tail remained, he presented himself to his normally elongated companions. So I took thought, and invented what I conceived to be the appropriate title of "agnostic." It came into my head as suggestively antithetic to the "gnostic" of Church history, who professed to know so much about the very things of which I was ignorant; and I took the earliest opportunity of parading it at our Society, to show that I, too, had a tail, like the other foxes. . . .
>
> That is the history of the origin of the terms "agnostic" and "agnosticism." . . .

Unfortunately, Huxley never really utilized his definition of "agnosticism" in an inspection of "the problem of existence." He preferred to back away from that. Huxley, in jousting with the theologians of his day,

attempted only to utilize the theory of agnosticism to analyze the New Testament. He used, particularly, the story of Jesus allegedly driving a legion of demons from either one or two men into a herd of swine. This story is told in Matthew 8:28-32 and Mark 5:2-13 with considerable variations in the two versions. Huxley was, he said, *agnostic* concerned with this story. That is, he could not know the proper elements of it; he was without knowledge. However, as an agnostic *he did not deny the story, or the historicity of Jesus Christ*; he simply pointed out that the certitude of the theologists was not his. Making references to the pressures brought, the fact that his teaching chair might be lost, it comes through loud and clear in reading Thomas Huxley that he was refusing to commit himself one way or the other concerned with the basic issue of the historicity of Jesus Christ, or the existence of god out of fear of reprisals from the religious community of England. He was brave enough to challenge that some stories were of such a nature that they were unprovable, but on the other hand could not bring himself to deny that they were probable. He remained with his feet in both camps for his lifetime.

Yet, his basic definition of agnosticism is in reality the Atheist position, which is exactly what he feared to put into the arguments. He said that the principle of agnosticism could be put in various ways, but ". . . they all amount to this: that it is wrong for a man to say that he is certain of the objective truth of any proposition unless he can produce evidence which logically justifies that certainty. That is what Agnosticism asserts; and, in my opinion, it is all that is essential to agnosticism." It is extremely important to point out the sentence in his essay, "Agnosticism and Christianity," which follows this assertion, since he and all agnostics since his time have failed to act upon it. "That which all agnostics deny and repudiate, as immoral, is the contrary doctrine, that there are propositions which men ought to believe, without logically satisfactory evidence; and that reprobation ought to attach to the profession of disbelief in such inadequately supported propositions."

The position of the theist and the Atheist is unequivocal. The theist, in the absence of any rational proof, believes in god on *faith*. The Atheist, in the absence of rational proof (for the belief in god), simply does not accept the theist position. Agnosticism is not a third position; it is the evasion of a position.

The agnostic offers self-justification for his cowardice by saying "The theist cannot prove the existence of god but the Atheist cannot prove the non-existence of god." The agnostic does not distinguish between the two positions but treats each as equally valid when 1) Atheists

demand reasons, verifiable proofs, and the theist gives only an assertion of his *feelings*; and 2) a basic tenet of logic is that an assertion negating a theory does not carry the burden of proof. He who asserts a premise is bound to the proof; not he who scoffs at it.

In the battle today with the fundamentalist religious radical right, the agnostic's position outside of the fray can only assist the position of the theist. As the rampant idiocy of the fundamentalist assaults the bulwarks of civilization: science and education, the agnostic must accept the onus of being a coward.

S: *I am a Jew and an Atheist. Your discussion here tonight seems to exclude me from the ranks of atheists. Are you an anti-Semite?*

A: How could I be an anti-Semite when I support the Palestinians, all of whom are Semites?

Judaism is a religion and one of the most pernicious that was ever developed. The Old Testament is one which records the doings of a vicious, sadomasochistic god and the small barbarian tribe which attached itself to this particularly ugly, brutal tribal deity. Judaism, Old Testament-based, has not one redeeming feature.

Atheists are those persons who are free from religion. For a person to say that they are Roman Catholic and Atheist, or Lutheran and Atheist, or Muslim and Atheist, or Jewish and Atheist is a contradiction in terms as well as a confusion of both ideology and loyalty.

I recognize that the Jew often claims affiliation to an ethnic group. In a sense, I could too; my clan is Irish. But, that distinction fades to nothing since my clan, my tribe, has been in the United States since the early 1600s. Atheists do not distinguish ethnic groups of special origin, or separate features. We do not set aside blacks as unique and to be handled differently, or blue-eyed blonds, or American Poles, or Irish, or Italian. The doors of American Atheists are open only to those who abandon religion, whatever brand it may be. Our doors are not open to those persons who have not severed their ties with Judaism. Yes, you are excluded from the ranks of Atheists when you profess to be a Jew.

Everything uniquely "ethnic" about the Jew is religious. Bar mitzvah is a religious rite. The celebration of Passover is a religious rite. The distinctive calendar is religiously based. The peculiar diet is derived from god. The mutilation of the penis of the young male is a Bible directive. The exclusivity claimed by the group is the cultural lag of being the chosen people. All of this is a little sick.

S: *Are you saying that the Jews also have no right to a homeland?*

A: If you were born and reared in the United States, this is your homeland.

I wish to speak to that also, for I think that there is an obvious violation of the principle of state/church separation. If one is a Jew, and only if one is a Jew, does one have the right of dual citizenship with a theocracy — Israel. If one is a Roman Catholic, one does not have the right of dual citizenship with another theocracy — the Vatican. As a person of Irish heritage, I cannot have a dual citizenship with both Ireland and the United States. I am bound by geographical accident of birth to be a citizen of the nation in which I was physically born. With the Jews it is otherwise, by legislative enactment of our U.S. Congress.

The underlying reason for this is so that the Jewish citizenry in our nation may freely transfer funds to, as well as have unhindered traffic with, that theocracy. I shudder to think of custom regulations which appertain. Every time that a Jew sends money to Israel, that Jew can take a write-off on his 1040 tax return — and I resent it since that increases my personal tax.

The constitution of the state of Israel and the Israeli Supreme Court both designate this nation as a theocracy. The small Atheist organization of former Jews which struggles for existence in Jerusalem is under many restrictions because of this. Citizenship has been denied to children whose fathers are Jewish but whose mothers are Gentile, only on that basis, since "Jewishness" is transmitted through the female. Not only is this an insult to our intelligence, it is an accommodation to the Jewish religion which is violative of every idea flowing from our First Amendment.

Those persons who are Jew first and American second should not even ask for citizenship in our nation. They have chosen their homeland; their place is with it. We feel the same with the Irish, the Poles, the Russians, the Finns, the Iranians. If they love "their country," let them go there and make improvements. We are Americans fighting to make improvements in our homeland.

American Atheists are inalterably opposed to a theocracy in the United States, in Mexico, in South America, in Canada, in England, France, the Philippines, Egypt, Iran, or Lebanon. We are equally opposed to the theocracy of Israel, the military of which receives $3 billion a year from the United States.

The Jew bases his claim to Israel on his Bible. Atheists see this as being absurd. After a short period of settlement there, the Jew was

Appendix

excerpts from
A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE
12TH ANNUAL NATIONAL
AMERICAN ATHEIST CONVENTION
WASHINGTON, D.C., APRIL 10, 1982

"Atheists"
by
Madalyn O'Hair

Tonight, I want to consider the Atheist.

I have been discovering during the last five years that I do not like Atheists very much — if at all. This is highly unusual, given as I am their most articulate, most educated, most charismatic, most highly visible, most competent, and their principal — if not their only — **most** recognized spokesperson.

What could turn a leader against her own?

Who are these Atheists?

Popularly known in our culture according to the degree of guts they possess, they classify themselves — probably correctly — as agnostics, ethical culturists, humanists, freethinkers, objectivists, secularists, rationalists, iconoclasts, and gawd (with whom I am not, nor are Atheists generally, on speaking terms) only knows what other nomenclature. We had been (note the past tense) lumping them all together and calling them all Atheists because we knew instinctively, rather than intellectually, that they were **against** theism. But, lately, especially during the last five years, it has become more and more evident that this is what is the matter. They are **against** theism, rather than free from it. They are still entangled in its coils.

It has been necessary, then, for us to classify them otherwise. There are primitive Atheists, philosophical Atheists, and practical Atheists. I rather suppose that I have been all three. Fortunately, I was able to transmit to my children enough of my agonizing that it was unnecessary for them to run the gamut.

But there are more. There are, for example, the hate-ridden Atheists, who usually convert from Roman Catholicism; the fanatical Atheists,

who usually convert from Jehovah's Witnesses; the mentally drugged Atheists, who convert from the Hare Krishnas. There are the neurotic Atheists, who have been psychologically injured by religion and seek to injure in return the faith that harmed them. If a Methodist minister runs off with his wife, the man who turns Atheist for it is **not** an Atheist; he is simply a Methodist who wants to injure his religion which held in its bosom a wife stealer. If the Presbyterian minister, who is discovered to be gay and kicked out of his church, turns to Atheism, he is **not** an Atheist. He is a gay Presbyterian, angry with his church and seeking revenge. If a Jew turns Atheist while completely attached to Zionism, this is a red flag waving to tell you that he is **not** an Atheist — he is, rather, identifying with a group which gives him some sense of identification. Alternately, with anti-Semitism rife in our nation, a committed Jew can hide behind the name "Atheist," showing his fear that he may be an object of attack if he openly maintains his Judaism. These are psychologically injured persons who need to assuage their wounds elsewhere and not use the vehicle of Atheism to take revenge, to seek cover, or to lick their wounds. They don't belong where they pretend to be.

But what of some of the others? I want to look at them too. The Primitive Atheist is everywhere in the United States, usually on campus, usually among the young. A primitive Atheist is one who comes of intellectual age, does a double take at Christianity which dominates our nation, finds it to be incredible — as any thinking persons would — and announces, "I don't believe in all that crap!" and lets it go at that. His clothing habits, his eating habits, his recreational habits, his sexual habits, his personal relationships, the politics of his nation, the international tensions which redound in his life, bringing with them the danger of war, increased tax bills, all seriously affecting his life day by day, he brushes aside as not being consequential, even if he sees the infringement upon him.

In a sense, the primitive Atheist cannot be blamed. The reinforcement of religion is everywhere around him, and if he seeks information on Atheism, he cannot find it in his library, his school, his radio, his newspaper, his television, the magazines he reads, the friends with whom he associates, on his job, or in his culture anywhere. Therefore, feeling a little like a freak, he keeps his ideas to himself and attempts to adjust in the totally religion-saturated culture in which he finds himself. Everywhere in the United States, the primitive Atheist is married to, or living with, a theist.

He cannot tell his parents he is an Atheist. If he openly confronted

them, he knows they would be distressed. Privately he feels somewhat guilty and struggles with what appears to him to be the fact that rejection of his parents' religion is really rejection of his parents. He cannot separate the two and is forced into a life of hypocrisy, never telling his parents of his true posture. Often, this man goes to church. Like as not, he contributes in the basket. He sends his children to Sunday school so they "won't be different." He keeps a civil tongue in his head when he talks to the religious and inside is a bitter gnawing.

He may just as well be on the side of Jesus, since every action of his supports the religious culture.

The next category is the Discreet Atheist. These people come from the liberal branches of religion, quite frequently the Presbyterian, or the Episcopalian — an intellectual religion rather than a hoot-and-holler one such as the Baptists or the Methodists. These people know no more than the primitive Atheist, but they have class. They usually join the Unitarian church, or — if they are Jewish, the Ethical Culture society — and they live (semi-)happily ever after with substituted dogmas, creeds, and routines to fill the gap that they imagine was left in their lives when they stepped away from their church. They float around in a small esoteric Unitarian group which plays the game of "discussion in private" in a building which looks like a church. The group formally preserves the form, but not the content, of a religious institution and with this deceit can remain in the human community without censure: "I'm a Unitarian" or "I'm an Ethical Culturist" gets them by. Since they go to church every Sunday, their neighbors think they are bona fide theists and that the word Unitarian means one god (which it does) or that the Ethical Culturist means one who accepts the guidelines of the Sermon on the Mount.

From this develops another category of Atheist, the Philosophical. "Oh, Ingersoll, I beseech thee, to protect us all from their kind." The philosophic Atheist does a triple take of Christianity and turning to philosophy gets hopelessly bogged in that mire. But, before that he reads the Bible: the King James, the Standard, the Douay, the Revised, the renewed, the reedited, the reinterpreted, the reissued. Not nauseated, he turns to the Vedas, the Upanishad, the Torah, the Bhagavad Gita, the Ramayana, the Kama Sutra, the Baha'u'llahy, the Koran, the Book of Mormon, Science and Health, the Oahspe, the Urantia, the I-ching, the inscrutable concepts of the East. I have seen him with *The Tao of Physics* in hand. He knows the teleological argument for god, or the ontological, or the epistomological, or the moral, or the entropic, and can discuss them interminably, or refute them in excess. He

delights in a two-hour discussion of Pascal's wager and can use hours of priceless living time analyzing the history of religious theories and diverse theologies. This man smokes a pipe, wears a slightly worn tweed jacket, and brags about waiting for his wife to have her orgasm first. He has been ten years in the American Humanist Association and will live (semi-)happily ever after, deeply immersed in obscurism, reading in depth the Gentile, erudite, and completely worthless articles in *Free Inquiry* or memorizing Smith's *Atheism, The Case against God.*

I have nothing **against** god. How could I? No god exists. I can't waste my time on that. However, the animosity of the religious and the bias of government do exist and it is here that I can make my blows felt on behalf of individual and intellectual freedom.

Many philosophy professors who think they are Atheists beat ideas to death with words. I can no longer bear to hear Nietzsche characterized in three sentences. Or have Feuerbach analyzed in terms of Comte, or Camus balanced against Sartre. Bultmann is not our man, nor Tillich, and I am tired of having them thrust upon us. Frankly, "my dear, I don't give a damn" about either Plato or Aristotle. If Socrates were alive today, I would be the one to hand him the hemlock.

But you have not lived until you have met the Scientific Atheist who can prove exactly when, where, and how the cosmos (if I may call it that) came into being, or did not come into being. He will browbeat you with his knowledge concerned with the universe being infinite, or finite, depending upon which side he has come down. *He knows!* He was there, Charlie! And, if you don't believe it, look at this mathematical equation. In addition to his recurring allusions to Einstein, he has Carl Sagan and Sagan's entire "Cosmos" series on videotape.

Beyond all of these there is another type of Atheist. He is the one who has a petty hate. He can recite an extraordinary number of incidents where priests were discovered living with their housekeepers. The exposure of John Cardinal Cody, of Chicago, sent him into convulsions of joy which lasted for weeks. This Atheist collects news items and sends them to The American Atheist Center — wherein ministers misappropriated $15.73 from the roofing fund, where a male church organist made a pass at a small boy in Sunday school, where the church secretary was found making out on a church pew with the choir director, where the minister's wife was fined for running a red light. He does not recognize any of this for what it is: trivia. It has nothing to do with religion or Atheism, but only with the follies and foibles of the human animal in any society, in all ages. Usually this type of Atheist had a trauma conversion to Atheism, not an intellectual one, and can well

have a trauma conversion back to theism. They are nitpickers. We had one in the Atheist Center and he had a psychotic episode when we told him to take money out of the petty cash box to pay for the office coffee. They proliferate throughout every other category of Atheist and usually they are the most mean and petty persons in the human community.

Then, of course, we have the Sectarian Atheist. This person has another priority which comes first. Atheism is secondary in his life and this man is destructive to our cause. The female of this species is shrill, dishonest, and tenacious, or modest and soft spoken as she lies and schemes. The Sectarian Atheist attacks any Atheist organization which he joins for not putting his cause first, above the cause of Atheism. And, we have had them: the gay who would bring Atheism down if it did not fight his fight, the woman who knifes in the back because we are not feminist enough. I will be challenged by one of them for using the correct grammatical reference of "he" in this speech when referring to a single element of the human species. There is the male who demands a refund of membership because we do business in a state which has not ratified the E.R.A. There is the male who quits us because he opposes abortion and there is the male who quits us because he favors abortion. The former would make a physical attack upon The American Atheist Center rather than have his sperm brought to naught in an abortion — as if we had the magical power to control what **his** woman did or did not do. The factional fights over politics and the attempts of one or the other factions to gain control has had devastating effects on every Atheist or pseudo-Atheist organization in the United States for the last 200 years.

There is another type of Atheist, which I designate as the Opinion Atheist. He has the idea that everyone in the United States is entitled to his opinion, whether or not he has made an effort to arrive at that opinion through education (formal, informal, or gained through living). Mistaking our nation's alleged mandated civil equality for intellectual equality, this uninformed, or badly informed, or misinformed Atheist intrudes his opinions at every level, if they would be disastrous to the cause or not. The Opinion Atheist invariably laps over into another category: Freddy, the Free Loader. This is the one who calls The American Atheist Center and demands to talk to me, or to Jon, for an hour, keeping us away from important duties there and punctuating the call with the phrase "I'm paying for this call." This Atheist is too "free spirited" to join an organization and feels that the *American Atheist* journal is a useless expenditure of the money he would never contribute. He is totally unwilling to support anything for the good of human-

kind; his focus is only on what is good for him. He takes "as a right" from our human society; but never gives.

There is another category which seems to cut across all the rest, also. I call this the Messiah Atheist. This Atheist plays the Jesus game in that it is absolutely necessary for him to worship someone. Often he worships me, or Isaac Asimov, or Carl Sagan, or anyone in public life whom he perceives to be an Atheist whether that person in deed and in fact is really an Atheist or not. This Atheist also worships Reggie Jackson, John Lennon, Paul Newman, and Jane Fonda. He even worships Terry Bradshaw, who is a religious nut. He does not understand that there are no messiahs in Atheism and that the heroes and heroines are those who work steadily and (often) quietly over many years to make those changes in our culture which will benefit future generations. The real hero is the man who, at age 85, tenderly plants the acorn which will flourish as a mighty oak fifty years after he is dead. The Messiah Atheist, engrossed in another human, does not understand that the reward of a good life comes to everyone who invests in the future collective well-being of all humankind.

Ah, but there is another Atheist. This is a Maslovian type, who just has a natural human thrust as to what is healthy, normal, and beautiful in life. His is a gut reaction as well as an intellectual one. He has, as a way of life, an underlying basic positivism. He is grounded in life and in its natural rules. He has a free-wheeling open-ended life-style. His emphasis is on the worth of the individual, his human dignity, his intelligence, and his ability to order his own life, his ability to enjoy the emotions with which he is endowed. And, his life is one of reason, learning from experience, common sense, and the broad lesson of human history. He confounds all by being happy and possessing a rich sense of humor. His life is unadorned with creeds, dogmas, and rituals. He is at home in the world. He moves freely and tries everything — once! He does not feel that he is a part of a chosen people, but only that he is a part of humankind. He knows no sacrificial redemption; he bends no knee; he bows no head. He is as negative as Columbus, who denied the flat earth. He is as destructive as was Galileo, who saw our globe as one part of a whole. He is as "anti" as a physician curing a disease. He is interested in the here-and-now, not in fantasy, and he sees religion — theism — as simply irrelevant to human life. He has no negative emotion-laden reaction to religion simply because that is not worth his time, or the investment of emotions. He understands that he is a part of humankind and that he must look after its interests as well as his own, to enjoy together that pursuit of happiness defined in our nation's foundation.

I hope that I speak to this type of Atheist.

There is yet another category of Atheist. This is he who realizes finally that every aspect of living depends in the last analysis on the total living of all humankind. He recognizes the need of a better, more rational, basis for culture. This Atheist tops off his understanding with a commitment which is unique. We are few in number. And, we care. We care desperately that our children and our grandchildren shall not need to experience the stifling manacles of thought restriction which bound humankind to suffering for thousands of years. Even if we stand alone — we stand.

At one time in our American history, we had another equally small body of men who recognized this principle and this small group wrote a Constitution which embodies several principles. These principles broke the United States away from the stream of history and made us particularly and significantly unique as a nation. They premised our nation on the principle of the separation of state and church.

It is now our task to carry this important nation, and all of humankind, into the future where Atheism is the basic posit of life, reason is the only guide, understanding is the only requirement; where education and science are the primary instruments toward a fulfilled life for all and where, finally, the mind is free.

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Compiled from questions actually asked by university students, radio talk-show audiences, and persons attending lectures given by Jon G. Murray and Madalyn Murray-O'Hair, this compendium actually contains more than all the questions you ever wanted to ask American Atheists. Best of all, it contains all their provocative, sometimes delightful, and often surprising answers. As timely today as when first published back in 1982!

"The basic premise of Christianity is intolerance. The Christian cannot just have his belief and permit everyone else to have theirs. Jesus Christ demanded that the Christian convert, and this has caused more grief to mankind than has any other religion. The old pagan gods lived side by side. But when Christianity came with its exclusivism, based on the first of the Ten Commandments, 'Thou shalt have no other God before me,' the killing began."

"When we unravel the secrets of the DNA, we cannot, as a culture, accept that your mythological Jesus drove demons out of a human being and into a herd of swine."

"If you want churches, build them and support them. If you want administrative organizations for your churches, build them and support them. If you want schools, hospitals, religious institutions of any kind, build them and support them. The Atheists have a right to balk when you demand that all of these institutions are completely tax free and when they are given the largess of government in every conceivable way, at taxpayer expense."

"Atheists do not have problems about god, heaven, hell, prayer, souls, angels, devils, life after death, sin, guilt, and so on. We are free from religion. And that is a big relief."

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